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Grattas

1251

LEGENDS OF THE RHINE

AND OF
THE LOW COUNTRIES.

BY
THE AUTHOR OF "HIGHWAYS AND BY-WAYS",
ETC.

' All thynges in this Boke that ye shall rede,
Doe as ye lyst, there shall no manne you binde
Them to beleue as surely as your crede;
But, notwithstandynge, certes in my mynde,
I durst well swere, as true ye shall them fynde,
In euery poynt eche answer by and by,
As are the iudgmentes of astrologye." SIR THOMAS MORE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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HTC

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VIADEL

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THE CURSE
OF
THE BLACK LADY.

A LEGEND OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY.

CONTINUED.



VOL. II.

B

THE CURSE
OF
THE BLACK LADY.

A LEGEND OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER VII.

ON the return of the brothers from Montreuil, Count Guy, acting under the influence of Baldwin, asked a private audience of Marguerite. He entered her apartments as usual, and with an humble salutation to his mother, and kneeling upon her footstool, kissed her hand, and then proceeded to say ; “ The grand chancellor has doubtless put into your hands the conclusion of the treaty with England, thus so happily terminated ? ”

The Countess scarcely moved a muscle of her countenance, so discontented and dark, but made a slight affirmative motion with her head.

He then proceeded to inform her that Edward had proposed Philip of France as mediator in the war about the cow, that had desolated all the Low Countries for more than two years, and that the Duke of Brabant approved his mediation.

The same cold, sullen, and selfish indifference was still apparent in the face of the Countess.

“ But I have yet other intelligence of a mission with which the Countess honoured me when I attended St. Louis to the Holy Land, and which my apparent failure made me hesitate to communicate, but now that two circumstances which seem to me of some importance give me hopes, I have obtained a clue——”

The countenance of Marguerite no longer exhibited a listless inanity. Every feature was animated with a fierce exultation. She invited Count Guy, her son, to a place at the table at which she was seated, and resting her head on her hand, she so nearly approached Count Guy that he felt her breath on his face as she was speaking. “ Guy,” she began with a forced and harsh voice, in those querulous tones that thrilled

upon every nerve, "So long a space hath elapsed since your expedition, that I thought you had forgotten my message to the late King of France."

"Believest thou then, Madam, that thy commands could lightly be forgotten? I importuned the king for many a weary day, and just before he died I asked a private audience. He yielded to my prayer. 'What wouldst thou?' said he, (and methinks his death-like, hollow voice still rings in my ear). 'Can the passion of revenge even now occupy thy mind, when thou seest a fellow mortal trembling on the brink of the grave, where all human passions lie buried with every human hope?'"

"*Every passion!*" said the Countess; "I have but one. *Every hope!* What hope is left for me?"

Count Guy continued. "'And tell the Lady Marguerite to forgive, as she would be forgiven.'"

"*I forgive?*" said the Countess, raising her head from her hand, and opening her eyes, with a repulsive stare and fierce surprise.

"Madam, I but repeat our conversation. But

Labrosse, I said, O king, let but thy son yield up my mother's serf, or desire him to declare to the Countess where he hath placed the boy committed to his charge, as well as discover where is the mother of that boy."

"And what replied the king?" asked the Countess, with the most deep yet suppressed anxiety.

"By St. Michael and the dragon!" continued the Knight warmly; "He asked me, 'have I not yielded to the importunity of the daughter of the blessed Baldwin, rather than to the justice of the case, in awarding Flanders to thee in preference to the elder born, because his father had played her false, and because I thought the sacrifice might ward from the heads of d'Avesnes' children the curses denounced even to the third and fourth generation of those who fear not the Lord to do His will!'"

"'Tis well. Go on," said Marguerite, with concentrated rage.

"By our Lady of Grace, Madam!" said Guy, "'tis not so very well, as you will think when you hear what follows. 'Hath not John,' he asked, 'worked thy deliverance from captivity

at Westkapellan? When in violation of every breach you marched against them? Go, tell your mother to forget her revenge.’”

“ Forget! *I* forget my revenge!” cried Marguerite, hastily rising, and walking rapidly up and down the room. “ And what replied you to this?” she said, abruptly stopping short.

“ Madam!” said Guy, rising, “ I lifted my hand to strike him.”

“ And he felt you? You made him understand that the emperor’s daughter was not to be thus dictated to?”

“ Countess,” replied Guy, “ I should have done it, all dying as he was, but that he offered no resistance; on the contrary, he raised his eyes to heaven and prayed, ‘ Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.’ ”

An expression of contempt passed over the features of the Countess, as she retook her seat at the table.

It was now Count Guy’s turn to become restless and agitated. He rose from the table, remained for an instant opposite to his mother, then walked rapidly up and down the immense

apartment, then again stopped near his mother, and without looking at her, said, " I met with a marvellous strange circumstance as I came here last from Namur."

The lady raised her eyes to his face, but she spoke not.

Count Guy then began his narrative of his meeting with the Beguine in the forest, not forgetting her exhortation to him.

" And saw you her face?" said the lady, when he had finished his tale.

" I saw it, Madam, but not to note its features, it was not given me to do so. It was ghastly pale, and when she held her hand up thus, it seemed transparent."

" And how long is it since this happened, say you?" asked the Lady Marguerite.

" Madam, when I came here to take counsel of the mission to Montreuil," replied her son.

" And why did you not then inform me of the circumstance?" inquired the lady.

The same reason which had prevented his speaking of it then, now again kept him silent. It was that he feared the dame. To change the

conversation which was becoming unpleasant, as well as to ward off the question, he said, "I have another tale to greet your highness's ear."

"And how old may this next be?" inquired the dame, with sarcastic bitterness.

"Madam," replied her son, "'twas at Montreuil." - Here he paused for a moment, as though he waited some encouragement from the lady. But no expression of feature or of action informed him that she had even heard him speak. She seemed buried in thought—or perhaps absorbed in her habitual discontent with life.

Count Guy proceeded. "The Duke of Brabant was found at Paris with Edward, and they travelled to Montreuil together, as I have already informed your Grace. The duke had with him a numerous train. Among his followers was a troubadour or minstrel—the living image of Ada—methought 'twas Ada's self."

The Countess turned hastily round. "Again Ada!" she said.

"By my troth, madam, and according to my poor belief——"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE 19th of January is still kept in Brussels in commemoration of the return of Henry d'Assche from the Holy Land, where he had accompanied the kings of France and England. The festival is called the "Vrouwkens Avond," and the circumstances attending the welcome of the chief and his followers render it in general a scene of much mirth.

But an assembly of a far different description was collected in the ducal palace at Brussels in the year 1276, to commemorate the escape of their compatriots, for the banquetting-room there sparkled with all that was beautiful in person, adorned with all that was costly in dress, at a period when the ladies of the Low Countries were celebrated all over the world for their beauty, and the countries themselves for their wealth. They were now crowded round the Troubadour, or court minstrel, who was reciting the history of the expedition in the rude poetry

of the times. He sung how, Henry d'Assche with his friends and followers went to the Holy Land. The way was long and dangerous, the foes strong and treacherous, and friends uncertain.

How days, weeks, months, nay years passed away, and yet they came not back. Wives mourned their husbands, and children wept their parents, despairing of their return. At length, when the sun had nineteen times been hidden behind the western ramparts after the conclusion of the eleventh century, the lord appeared with such of his own vassals as had escaped the influence of the sun, and the sword of the Saracens.

Their joyful relatives were hastily assembled at the ample board, spread in the trophied hall of their lord, the horn of welcome passed rapidly round, and they caroused so long and deep that their wives were obliged to bear them to their couches.

The bard was young and handsome, and the most enthusiastic praises were lavished on his performance, for he was the favourite of Duke John of Brabant. He received the ap-

plause of his auditors with a bowed head, but his raised colour shewed him not insensible to their praises. And his glowing glance became more and more enthusiastic while it fell on two young and beautiful damsels, like the rosy clouds of evening following the course of the setting sun and deepening as they imbibe his rays.

The youngest and most beautiful of the two noble dames to whose bright glances the harp seemed to respire in more animated strains, was Jane, a lineal descendant of that noble lord whose prowess in the Holy Land, and narrow escape from the dangers surrounding him there, the bard had just sung. She was small, almost diminutive; but the most delicate proportions marked the contour of her sylph-like form. Her robe was blue, made square at the bust and surrounded with a rich silver embroidery, her shoes long and pointed, her fair hair drawn up to the crown of her head, whence floated a light slip of white gauze studded thick with silver stars, and which having been stiffened, fell to the lower part of her dress in the manner still visible in old pictures, and which gave to her delicate form

an almost ethereal appearance. Her soft blue eyes became yet softer as she listened to the minstrel's song.

Her companion was less fair, if beauty depend on symmetry of feature ; but her finely shaped head might have served as a model for a statuary. Her forehead also was perfect ; her brows, though clearly defined, being small and almost straight, and their light brown lines nearly descended to her ~~her~~ hazel eyes.

But it was round the mouth that played the expression which so bewitchingly characterized her countenance, varying with every emotion of her soul. Her form too, tall and dignified, was yet so nicely proportioned, and so much of grace regulated every movement, that it was almost as softly feminine as that of Jane.

Her robe was white and ample, made to fit to the bust, and confined round the waist by a girdle of pure gold*. The light brown hair was drawn up to the crown of her head, in the same manner as that of her companion, and confined there by a coronet of the same precious

* A woman whose character was not unimpeachable was not permitted to wear a golden girdle.

metal as her girdle, and from it a deep veil fringed with gold fell to her very feet; but so light was its texture, that her form was beautifully visible through its undulating folds; and the sleeves, large and open, showed her lovely arms to the admiring gaze.

This was the Princess Mary, who turning towards the minstrel, as his voice sank into silence at the conclusion of the last stanza, said, "Sir Adenez, you appear inspired this evening; never before have I heard such melodious tones from your harp; never so much soul in your voice!"

"It is that I am inspired in chanting the prowess and the perils of the ancestors of this beauteous damsel," said he, indicating with a softened glance, the fairy form of Jane, "and by the smiles of my noble mistress," he added, bending to receive the chain of gold she threw around his neck, and which her brother's page, young William de Bethune, presented to the Princess.

A slight change of her colour, and a scarcely perceptible tremor in the under lip, evinced there was something in the minstrel's speech that touched Mary nearly. She turned from him to

the dark-haired page, whose childish stature and youthful features but ill accorded with his passionate and marked expression as he followed every motion of the Princess with an eager gaze. She turned towards him, but she spoke not ; and it was evident that her thoughts were pre-occupied ; till he who had sought her notice with feverish anxiety, seized her veil and fondly pressed it to his lips. Then indeed she seemed to recover from her slight abstraction, and extended her hand to him, which he eagerly grasped to lead her up the room.

The dance and the feast succeeded to the music ; and it was not till a late hour that the Princess retired.

As she approached her apartment she was surprised by the sight of a *religieuse* of the order of the Beguines, then recently established in Brussels. Her pale countenance seemed yet paler beneath the black veil which shaded it. Her form was beyond the middle height, and she was thin even to emaciation. She bent her head to the courteous salutation of the Princess, and as the latter sought to enter her apartment, she prostrated herself almost across the door-

way, and lifting up her hands to heaven, uttered the following prayer from the Psalms:—"O Lord God of my salvation! Night and day have I cried unto Thee! O let my prayer enter into thy presence and incline thine ear unto my calling." She paused for a moment, and her dark eye gleaming with added brightness, she turned towards the Lady Jane and said, "Tell the Princess to hear my words and to listen to the admonitions of my mouth!" She paused as the fairy form she had addressed leaned mechanically towards her, as if to enforce her attention, and continued—"O tell her that it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in man!" Then elevating her voice, "Tell her it is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in princes. For if she go astray from the land of her youth, they shall persecute her without a cause. Woe, woe in Gallia! Woe, woe in the great city! For the proud have laid a snare for her! Yea they have set traps in her way, and therefore shall her heart be desolate within her. Her love——"

"Love!" cried Mary, with thrilling accents, for the fire had passed from the eye of the pro-

phetess, her face was no longer raised towards Heaven, whose behests she seemed obeying. And her voice sunk into silence as she vainly sought to finish the sentence. Her countenance became distorted with agony, and her throat choked with emotion. She fled !

“ And *Love !*” again cried the Princess, in those piercing tones which intense emotion can alone inspire. But the prophetess heard her not. She was gone. Nothing remained of her but the remembrance, which would not pass away.

The slumbers of the Princess were broken and unrefreshed. The form of the Beguine mingled with her dreams, and always appeared there associated with that of Adenez. And when the heated imagination of the Princess presented the nun again, it was with the dark eye of Adenez, sparkling in poetic fire, and the tones of his full rich voice, in all the enthusiasm of imaginative eloquence.

The day was already far advanced when the Princess awoke. Her first thought was of the nun. But it was in vain she inquired of the

attendants respecting the prophetess ; except those near her person at the time, nobody had seen her.

When she went to pay her respects to the Duchess, she was greeted with rather more than usual cordiality and kindness ; while a smile of some meaning accompanied her salutation. Having dismissed her attendants, she embraced the Princess a second time, while she said, “ At length, my fair sister, my first wish is likely to be accomplished ; and you are about to fill the high station to which your every movement declares you to be born. My brother, Philip of France, has sent to demand your hand.”

O what a torrent of feelings rapidly rushed through the bosom of the Princess at this intelligence. To the calls of ambition she was by no means insensible ; but hers was not that vulgar ambition which looks to rank alone without elevation of sentiment or character. She could feel too ; for her high rank had not placed her beyond the sensibilities of our nature. In the midst of the storm of feelings which thus engrossed her heart, the prophecy of the Be-

guine, appalling as it was, presented itself to her mind. She had foreseen then this demand, and foretold a whole host of evils following close upon it? Yet, how avoid the fate thus thrust upon her, which her sister had welcomed, and which her brother would also, without doubt, support, as consolidating more closely the alliance of the two states? She felt she should be obliged to yield, however her heart might suffer in the struggle. She therefore turned towards the Duchess, and striving to repress the tumultuous feelings which rendered the agitation of her heart too apparent, with as much calmness as she could assume, she replied, as courtesy dictated, to the congratulations of her sister; and begged to be allowed to retire, to endeavour to overcome the agitation into which this unexpected demand had thrown her, and in order to be ready to receive the official notice, which she supposed would soon arrive. But it was evening, when one of the officers of the court came with a message from her brother, who waited in the duchess's apartment, to attend her to the council chamber. It seems not to have been the custom in those days, for high-born damsels to have a

negative even, when a desirable match was proposed. At least my legend details no circumstances which might lead to the belief that such an alternative was left to the Princess Mary.

The next day was appointed for her to receive the congratulations of the court. The Lady Jane d'Assche did not await the time to express to the Princess all the delight she really felt; but advanced towards her with a face sparkling with joy and eyes bright with pleasure. "We shall then go to this beautiful France, to this splendid Paris, where there are fêtes every day, and where all the cavaliers in Europe attend the tournaments! And you, my Princess, will be a queen, instead of daughter-in-law to the melancholy Black Lady, and wife to her speculating son. I declare I never see him but I think he will give me a place in the learned Chronicles they say he is making of his times. O, I should die if I were obliged to live in sight of the dark countenance of the Countess Marguerite, and the penetrating glance of the cold-blooded Baldwin."

At length the hour arrived when she was to appear to receive the congratulations of her

friends. She retired for a few minutes to her oratory, that she might, by the exact performance of her devotional exercises, attain such a frame of mind as would enable her to receive as she ought the compliments of the court. But it would not be. A dark presentiment obscured all that was brilliant in the change, and exaggerated all the recollections of her childhood, which made her regret the past. To quit that home where she had been so happy ; to leave her brother the duke, whom she loved so tenderly ; poor Henry too, that heart too gentle ! To struggle against the vices, the cares, and the intrigues of a court ! Another presented himself to her remembrance, and a shade of deeper thought came over her mind and flushed her cheek. She trembled at its intrusion, started from her chair, and paced the room, every motion indicating that some powerful feeling agitated her sensitive bosom, till she was interrupted by the appearance of William, her brother's page.

“ The Duchess awaits you, Princess,” said the boy. She desired him to inform the Duchess that she would attend her immediately.

"But will you not come with me?" he cried, in a tone of earnest entreaty.

She turned towards him with tearful eyes, and unconsciously pursuing aloud the train of thought which his entrance had interrupted, "You too! All, all that is dear to me, I must leave!" she exclaimed. The boy looked astonished. "Leave me! my Princess!" he cried, while his inquiring look recalled her presence of mind. "Go, my child," she said to him, in that winning tone of voice so irresistible to the ear of affection—"I will follow thee!"

The boy looked upon her with an eager glance. But though his feelings were precocious, his reason was not enough matured to seek to divine what cause influenced the manner of Mary. But it was with evident reluctance he left her. When she descended, the Duchess met her at the door, and presenting her to the circle, was the first to congratulate her upon her approaching elevation. Every body crowded round her, and she received their compliments with much self-possession. A single glance told her that one, however, was wanting;—but that one had not forgotten her.

The harp's full vibrations were heard. And the note's rich swell evinced that no common hand, and no divided emotion waked that strain, where all breathed joy and gladness. And first he sang the maidenly graces and unrivalled beauty of the Princess, for whom nobles sighed and princes contended; then the brilliant qualities of her cultivated and powerful mind. But oh! better than all, the virtues that glowed in her generous heart!

"Beauty, talent, and goodness so superlative can only find their proper sphere on the most splendid throne. Happy the sovereign who can place her there. Thrice happy he, the bold son of the sainted monarch, who in gaining her heart, raises her to the only rank worthy her beauty, genius, and virtue!"

Yes, it was Adenez who raised the joyful strain. But not a single responsive emotion in the bosom of the Princess replied now to the notes of the bard. For the first time she was insensible to the influence of his art. The prophetess still exclusively filled her imagination, as she appeared in her dream, withering every hope—darkening every thought.

At length the bard himself approached, joy beaming in his eyes, animating his light step, and speaking in the lively tones of his voice—for his heart was filled with gladness. And the Princess ?

She received his congratulations with a coldness she could not repress. No compliment on his music evinced her sense of his talent. No animated smile informed him she approved his efforts employed in her praise.

CHAPTER IX.

A DESIRE to know something more of the mysterious being who had so astonished and interested her, induced the Princess to confide to Adenez the extraordinary prophecy of the Beguine, and to entreat him to make every inquiry likely to facilitate her wish, in the part of the town appropriated to that community.

These societies seem to have been peculiar to the Low Countries. They were first instituted by a priest of Liège, named Lambert le Bègue, towards the end of the twelfth century.

They had an establishment at Ghent which was the largest in the country. It was founded by Jane, the late, and richly endowed by Marguerite, present Countess of Hainault and Flanders. There was also one consisting of 2000 nuns at Nivelles.

That of Brussels was of yet more recent origin; having been founded in the year 1250. The first five Beguines were the daughters of a

farmer at Goych ; but at the period of our minstrel's visit, they amounted to some hundreds.

The vows of the community did not compel them to perpetual celibacy. They were professed for only seven years, at the end of which time they were permitted to lay aside the veil and return to the trials and pleasures of the world.

They were not domiciled under one roof like other religious communities ; but had each her separate habitation, unadorned except by the modesty, humility, and tranquil resignation of its unpretending inhabitant. The Beguines seemed united for mutual edification and the practice of those virtues so difficult to preserve in the vortex of corrupt society. They were constantly occupied ; needle-work, prayer, and meditation employed them in turn. Their manners were reserved, almost severe, in the every day relations with the world, the morals of which were at that time frightfully corrupt. In fine, the subjugation of every passion to the service of the Almighty seemed to be the end and aim of their existence.

Adenez was accompanied in his walk by William de Bethune. And as they descended the

town, they passed before the modest building appropriated to the reception of the hermits of St. Augustine. This was situated near the Beguinage ; and Adenez, if not so restlessly interested as the Princess to seek the elucidation of the mysterious language held by the nun, yet participated enough in her curiosity, to feel the desire of seeing this inexplicable prophetess infinitely predominate over every other consideration. Though much interested in this society he did not pause to visit it ; but proceeded to the Beguinage, which, in the midst of the populous city of Brussels, formed a little town apart. It consisted of thirty-two streets, or *ruelles* ; and the perfect neatness and almost uninterrupted quietness of this enclosure, formed a striking contrast to the noise and bustle, the hurry and confusion of that world beyond its walls.

In every corner where it was possible to place a sketch, a representation of some scriptural history was discovered. Adam and Eve in Paradise, placed at each side of the tree of knowledge of good and evil ; the apple which was to entail so much of misery upon her frail descendants

yet untouched in the hand of Eve. And the want of the truth and nature which have since so eminently distinguished the artists of this country, was supplied, if not compensated, by gaudiness of colouring and strongly marked outlines. In another place, was a carving in wood of the crucifixion, with the weeping Magdalen at the foot of the cross, or the Virgin bearing the dead body of the Saviour on her knees, while the seven daggers pierce her heart.

Then again, behind rude latticed-work, Our Lady glittered all resplendent in blue and gold, made doubly brilliant by the flickering lights placed in a row before her, to mark the piety or the superstition of the sainted maidens of the society.

Adenez had passed a moat with a drawbridge, when a heavy gate creaked on its hinges, to give him admission through the thick wall which surrounded the little community. All means of entrance was closed every night at eight o'clock, beyond which period no man was permitted to be within its walls nor was any egress allowed after that hour.

They found but few people about the streets,

but while they were yet examining the works of art we have been describing, the bell sounded for church service, and each house poured forth its inhabitants, who with that tranquil air which so particularly marked the Beguines entered with noiseless step the spacious church to which Adenez and his young friend, the page, followed without further ceremony. As he passed among them to enter their temple, Adenez minutely examined every figure, and looked with worldly irreverence into every pair of fine eyes. And many a veil was drawn demurely and closely over the features which he so nicely scrutinized. But though he looked round with a most poetical determination to find the prophetess, not even the eye of a poet could imagine any thing approaching to supernatural inspiration in the statue-like figures by which he was surrounded. There was indeed the black robe so accurately described by the Princess; the band of white sendel across the tranquil forehead; the short black veil demurely pinned on each side the temple, together with the snowy lawn with which it was lined, and the white guimp which covered the bust. But that look which spoke of com-

munion with beings beyond this world, which denoted an intimate correspondence with things mysterious if not forbidden, and which brought futurity present, he sought in vain.

Mortified with his useless search, he listened to the request of William, that he would return through that part of the town which is now called the Putterie, but which was then occupied by the convent of the Templars. Who, at that moment, looking towards their splendid establishment with its massive walls, its numerous windows, the spacious doors, from which were seen issuing its lordly tenants, bearing in their person that mixture of character, that union of the two institutions then held to be the most sacred, that combination of chivalry and religion, which it seemed the height of human ambition to attain, could have supposed it leaned so nearly towards its fall?

The page having expressed a desire to go in and visit the Templar Hildebrand, Adenez readily consented to accompany him.

The Templar having immediately obeyed the porter's summons, presented a noble bearing, having however more of the warrior than of the

churchman in his appearance. Disdaining even the affectation of the humility which had characterised the founders of his order; and could the term have been applied to the loftiness which seemed to emanate from conscious superiority of mind, his deportment might have been called haughty. Perhaps majesty would better have designated his peculiar manner.

He approached the boy and took him kindly by the hand, while he proceeded to those inquiries that might have been deemed of mere courtesy, had not their extreme minuteness, united to an earnest seriousness and a warmth and cordiality in the tones of the voice, given a character of lively friendship to the words. He then, following the page's glance, turned towards his companion, and had begun his compliments in the most polished language, when his eyes suddenly became rivetted on the countenance of his visitor, with an intensity of feeling which spoke at once in his quivering lip and agitated brow. His emotion was but momentary, and he recovered himself sufficiently to apologize for its display by imputing his agitation to the very close resemblance his visitor bore to a dear friend.

He then made known his desire to become acquainted with Adenez.

The conversation soon turned upon the marriage of the Princess; and the Templar asked:—"Do you, Sir Minstrel, accompany your noble mistress to France?"

"It would be a very severe privation for me to be separated from the Princess," replied Adenez.—"Yet it will also be exceedingly painful to leave the Duke and Duchess, together with the young Henry, to be established among perfect strangers!"—He paused for a minute before he added.—"Notwithstanding this, I would willingly believe that the Prince, who hath gained the epithet of 'The Bold,' is not unworthy the hand of my noble mistress, the Princess Mary. You know him, Sir Hildebrand?"

"Yes," replied the knight; "I knew him in Africa. And you are doubtless aware that when the Holy Louis expired, his heir, Philip, was with him before Tunis."

"He, too, was attacked by the fever so fatal to the French troops!" said Adenez.

"Yes, and but slowly recovering when the

king his father breathed his last. And so much was the army discouraged that when the Moors attacked them, in their first panic there is no doubt but they would have entirely overcome us, but Philip immediately assembled such of his nobles as had escaped the ravages of the climate, to consider what means would be advisable to follow, and a truce was the expedient proposed."

"A truce!" exclaimed the minstrel, "I thought that a peace had been concluded with the infidels?"

"No," replied the Templar. "St. Louis had strongly recommended that no peace should be made; therefore they rested upon a peace for ten years. And as soon as this was properly ratified, he went with Charles of Anjou to Sicily, where he was compelled to stay from the effects of his illness."

"Was it not during his residence there, that Henry of Germany was assassinated in the church?" asked Adenez.

"Yes," replied the Templar, "and in the presence of Philip and Edward of England. Indeed, such a succession of misfortunes awaited

the young king as perhaps had never attended a similar dignity. First, his wife, Isabella of Arragon, was crossing a stream on horseback, when the animal made a false step and threw her. This accident occasioned her death."

"She has, I think, left three sons?" said Adenez, musing.

"Yes!" answered the Templar. "And this circumstance, perhaps, assisted to establish in him that fortitude he displayed under such a combination of misfortunes."

"His father and his wife!" said Adenez, with feeling.—"To carry both home in their coffins!"

"'Twas almost too much," pursued the Templar, "but he had also the King and Queen of Navarre; his sister Elizabeth. The Count and Countess of Thoulouse, his uncle and aunt, had also fallen victims to the unsparing climate!"

"I fear me," said Adenez, "that if the surname of the Bold could only be acquired by seeing the loss of my nearest connexions with indifference, I should scarcely obtain it!"

"Nay," answered the Templar, "that is hardly a fair statement of the case, Sir Adenez. You should recollect that Philip, independent of

His personal afflictions, was placed in circumstances of considerable difficulty, from which he extricated himself with singular boldness and address. But though he did thus advance beyond the hopes of his friends, I thought I perceived in him an indecision, which leads me to apprehend that he does not possess much real strength of character. And the manner in which he suffers himself to be so strangely governed by his barber, Labrosse, seems to confirm my suspicions."

"But he is capable of loving, and of rightly estimating a creature so superior as our Princess!" said Adenez, anxiously.

"If the Princess will condescend to manage him, she will indeed be a blessing to France, and——" but here the Templar checked himself, and changing the conversation, referred to the singularities attending the burial of a French king.

"You mean," said Adenez, "that which imposes on the eldest son the duty of taking the dead body of the deceased monarch on his shoulders."

"The same," said the Templar. "The eldest

sons of the kings of France consider this as an imperative duty; and Philip, assisted by his household, thus bore St. Louis to the tomb."

"And he was crowned directly after the funeral, was he not?" said Adenez.

"So soon," replied the Templar, "that they say the meats prepared for the funeral dinner, served for the coronation repast. On this occasion it was that Labrosse was made Grand Chamberlain."

"And this Labrosse! How is it, that from so low a station he hath arisen to so high a post?" asked Adenez.

"Nay, Sir Minstrel," answered his companion, "that is a puzzling question, and to answer it properly I ought to be able to penetrate the very depths of the human heart. Perhaps he has persuaded the young monarch that in accepting his favours, he loves him for himself alone. Perchance he hath persuaded him that in protecting those whom the late king patronized, he proves that he inherits the saintly wishes of his father; perchance——"

"I see, I see," said Adenez impatiently, and then continuing in all the ardour of an imagination

powerfully excited by his subject. "O Sir Templar! Could you but read my heart! Could you know from what a pure motive I desire to have my doubts as to the king's character decided, you would approve even if you were to decline answering them. The heart of the Princess is formed of the softest, best, and most angel-like perfections of our nature. With an understanding which, though so superior, is entirely unfitted for a commerce with the world; with a mind amply stored with the richest imagery, she cannot look upon aught so hateful as vice. She loves virtue as a duty enjoined by Heaven, but she loves it perhaps with yet greater zest as conveying a pleasurable emotion. Is she wronged—does she see vice or meanness predominating over modest or unpretending worth, her indignation is keen—but let the oppressor in his turn become unfortunate, she soon conceives him to be reformed and restores him to her bosom. You, Sir Hildebrand, know far better than I can, the dangers to which such a character is exposed in a court—and in a court of France!"

"Such as you have described, I ever believed the Princess; and willingly would I point out

some means of freeing her from the dangers which await her there, could I see any equally powerful with her own uprightness and the benevolence of her disposition. Her unsuspecting nature may indeed lead her into snares, but sooner or later her sensibility must be rightly appreciated. Labrosse I know not; yet think there is some mystery lurking under his rapid advancement!" Then lowering his voice almost to a whisper, "Keep an active eye upon him."

"But the king!" exclaimed Adenez, with that irritable impatience so frequently the attendant of the poetic character. "Is he capable of loving and of appreciating the Princess?"

"In good truth," replied the Templar, "he was never thought to be deficient either in affection or principle. The only danger is, lest the one should be opposed to the other by artifices. Princess Mary has only to be seen and known to be loved, and this is much. For you, Sir Minstrel," added the Templar, significantly, "look you do not fall."

"I!" replied Adenez; "I am too insignificant to serve even as a mark to their shafts."

The conversation that followed was desultory

and uninteresting, and Adenez soon after took his leave ; to wander silent and sad ; to muse over the mysterious destinies that await man here ; to ponder upon, and almost to mourn, the perverseness of his fate ; to regret his cloister ; and finally to dwell upon the fortunes of the Princess, and to lose all thought of self in revelling in fancied scenes of which her beautiful image was the grace and the glory.

CHAPTER X.

WITH the exception of the beautiful banks of the Meuse, there is no part of the Low Countries which can be compared to the environs of Brussels for picturesque and agreeable scenery.

In the thirteenth century, when the magnificent forest of Soignies overshadowed the very walls of the city, its site was enchanting.

We have already observed that the Princess found a melancholy pleasure in revisiting every place associated with early recollection; and she planned an excursion to Foret, in order to visit the Benedictine Abbey there, in which she was to be accompanied by a numerous train of attendants.

They left town by the gate leading to Halle, and the Princess turned out of the direct route, that she might pursue her little excursion beneath the shade of the stately oaks of the forest, the growth of centuries.

Adenez rode up to the side of her horse to

point out to her the tower of Anderlecht, then picturesquely visible through a natural vista. "Yes, Adenez," she said, "and I have already been gazing at the tower of St. Nicholas, till my heart aches at the recollection that I must be immured within the walls of a town, which, though perhaps equal to our own in magnificence, yet as it offers no scenes upon which the memory can rest, is but to my imagination a mere mass of wood and stone."

"But, my noble mistress, by becoming the patroness of some of their religious institutions, as all your ancestors have been of those in their dominions, you will associate them in the best manner in your recollection."

"And you, Adenez, who have never entered this forest without saying an *Ave Maria* at the shrine of St. Guidon, at Anderlecht, think you that you will easily find one in Paris to replace this object?"

"Pardon me, Madam. I have no means of creating myself an interest by becoming a benefactor. I have ever loved to wander in these dark forest shades; and the knowledge that the fierce wolf was prowling around me perhaps did

not render the scene less dear to me—St. Guidon ever has been my protector,” replied the minstrel.

“But,” said the Princess Jane, “it is St. Alène’s shrine we are about to visit, is it not?”

“It is, dear Jane; know you nought of the life of this precious martyr? No, then attend. She was the daughter of the Lord of Dilbeck, and lived in the seventh century, when St. Amand came to this forest to preach the true faith. Her father was sanguinary and cruel, but she was the most amiable of all God’s creatures. She heard the Christian doctrine and became a convert; for the missionary told her that God is love! And her blue eyes filled with tears as she raised them towards the heavens, his supposed throne, for she felt, Adenez, that if there was a God his essence must be love.”

“St. Gudule and the Holy Mother preserve us!” said Jane, crossing herself; “did she then not believe in God?”

“No, my dear Jane,” replied the Princess, mildly; “for the country at that time was in a dreadful state, the lands were uncultivated and the people mere robbers. St. Amand and the

other holy men who came over to civilize them, found the country peopled with heathens, ignorant and brutal."

"But St. Alène?" said the Troubadour, impatiently.

"St. Amand told her that the Christian doctrine taught her to 'love your neighbour as yourself.' This time, my dear Jane, the poor Alène could not *follow* his doctrine—for her heart had anticipated his words. Again he said, 'do to others as ye would they should do to you!' Could the maiden, Adenez, who in the great commandments taught by the Christian minister, found every want of her heart fulfilled, resist the truths that followed? Alène became a convert and was baptized."

"And her father?" said Jane, leaning forward, for the story interested her.

"The Lord of Dilbeck hated the Christians," replied Mary. "He could not pardon his enemies, for he was revengeful; he could not shew mercy, for he was blood-thirsty; nor would he seek to conquer these bad dispositions, for he was hard-hearted and obstinate."

“ And did he permit his daughter——” inquired Jane.

“ You shall hear,” said the Princess, interrupting her. “ One day he saw his daughter going to the church to confess and to communicate. He questioned, and found she was a Christian. He threatened, and she supplicated. For she could not abjure her faith, that faith which taught her that she had another Father who was all love. Who called her to Him by the Spirit, which spoke in her heart, as well as by the priest who had preached His holy word.”

“ St. Amand?” said Jane.

The Princess did not heed this interruption, but continued. “ And He, the essence of love, had pity upon her, Adenez, and took her from her cruel father. Even as she was going to his temple, ruffians appointed by the ferocious Lord of Dilbeck, slew her.”

“ What! her own father?” inquired Jane, shuddering.

Adenez saw that Mary was overcome with the subject, he therefore continued the tale. “ The crown of martyrdom was thus awarded to Alène,

and her merits doubtless pleaded for the Lord of Dilbeck, because he too was converted, and left all his goods to the church when he became a Christian."

The party moved on silently, and Adenez mused upon the probable fate of a being so susceptible as the Princess, till they arrived at the convent; when Mary, dismissing her attendants, sought the shrine of the saint, before which she kneeled for some minutes in silent prayer, when she suddenly exclaimed—"Like thee, fair Saint, I am about to be sacrificed—but not like thee, in the service of my God! Oh, why cannot this destiny be spared me! Why was I born in such exalted rank to add another to the victims sinking beneath the weight of their gaudy trappings! I have even been warned of my fate, why then is it that I am not permitted to fly from it! Teach me then, holy Saint, by thy example, the resignation required of me if I must fall a victim, and strength to support me if I must bear the burden and yet live!"

Whilst thus indulging a regret as impolitic as unavailing, she thought she heard a rustling

motion near her. She turned to discover who had been witness to an agitation meant for no mortal eye, and she beheld Adenez. He advanced as soon as he perceived that he was noticed, "Pardon me, most gracious princess," he cried, "this obtrusion on your privacy. I heard your voice in apparent complaint, and feared lest you were indisposed; I therefore came forward to offer my services."

Adenez was an orphan, and though no one knew his parents, it was generally understood that he was of illustrious birth. He had been a ward of the late king, and his widow, the high-minded Alix, had cherished him with great affection, so that he had been admitted into the closest familiarity with the reigning family. When his extraordinary talent developed itself, and his wishes loudly pronounced his aversion from a monastic life, the duke, though disappointed, was not displeased, and it was with equal pride and pleasure that he distinguished him by every mark of honour and esteem which it was in his power to bestow. Relying on these claims on her forgiveness, he ventured softly to

remonstrate with the Princess against the indulgence of a melancholy equally injurious to herself and unjust towards her royal lover.

Adenez was earnest in his remonstrance, perhaps even free; but the most profound respect marked every accent. His eyes were indeed averted from her, and bent towards the shrine whose tenant she had been invoking, but a glow suffused his cheeks; and raising his eyes towards her as he ceased speaking, he saw her lovely countenance agitated with emotion, while her eyes filled with tears, as looking towards him, she said, "And you too, Adenez, do you desire this sacrifice of me?"

There are those whose whole lives take their tone from the effect of a single moment; when one prompt idea flashes across the brain, imparting a new and brilliant colouring to the past, the present, and the future.

When Adenez met the look that accompanied Mary's words, an expression of wild inquiry lighted up his features, while he placed his hand on his forehead as if to concentrate his thoughts—but before the Princess could turn to leave the chapel he was at her feet. She felt the pressure

of his lips on the heavy silken veil, or *faille*, in which she was enveloped, as she moved aside. "Hear me, Princess," he exclaimed, "while I swear upon the pure shrine on which the lady of my thoughts hath shed the tear of grief! And thou, pure Spirit of the sainted martyr, to whom her prayer hath been addressed, bear witness to my vow! That pure bosom, lady, shall never sigh in solitary splendour, while a heart beats in mine. And thou, high Heaven! hear thou my oath in this sacred temple, and rule my future happiness in this bright world, and that far brighter, where thy saints repose, as I perform the duties self-imposed by its decree. In every change of thy destiny, lady, whether it is cast in foreign climes or in thy own loved land, I will follow to serve thee. When thou diest then will I die. With a love as true as that of a brother to a sister, as pure as that of a mother to a child, may Heaven forsake me and mine if aught but death divide thee from me!"

He waited not to hear her reply, but fervently pressing the veil he had held to his forehead, he left the church.

Strange that words so full of emotion should

instantaneously calm the agitation of the Princess! For a moment she rested immoveable on the spot hallowed in her eyes, as that on which the vow of her friend had been uttered. She again threw herself upon her knees and lifted her voice in fervent prayer; but it was not the prayer of a wounded spirit, for the smile of grateful thankfulness rested on her lips, while a thrill of delight agitated her heart. She rose from her knees, and looked with complacency on each object surrounding her. The sun, which had all the morning been obscured by clouds, now shone brightly through the narrow church windows, throwing a flood of light across the spot where Adenez had knelt and breathed his vow.

Every year throughout her life (and it was a long one) on the anniversary of this her visit to the shrine, she sent an offering to the saint.

She paused so long to contemplate the stream of light on the narrow shrine of St. Alène, that her ladies came to seek her, and conduct her to the noble dames of the convent. They conversed anew of the miracles which had been wrought by the relics of the saint, particularly

by the arm which had been severed from her body by the assassins. Jane was ready to add another to the list, puzzled as she was by the change effected in the look and manner of the Princess, who seemed pleased with every thing around her. She looked over an illuminated bible, presented to this order by the first abbot of Afflighem. Among the portraits was one of St. Alêne, and over this the Princess breathed a sigh, but there was nothing of bitterness in it.

She then rambled into the gardens, and admired the beautiful situation of the convent, bathed by the river Senne on one side, while on the other rose a hill richly clothed with wood. But while she looked upon, she saw not the scene so rich in all the charms of nature; for the thoughts of the Princess were in the church and lingering round the narrow shrine of St. Alêne.

When Adenez had left her there so suddenly, he observed, as he quitted the church, a man wrapped in a long cloak, fly swiftly from behind one of the heavy antique pillars. Adenez started, for much as his attention was absorbed by what had passed before the shrine, he could not

help observing that the intruder had probably been placed in such a situation for the purpose of overhearing his conversation with the Princess ; and pure as was his feeling towards her, and limited as was his knowledge of the world, he could but acknowledge that virtuous as were their mutual feeling, so well understood by each other, they would not thus be scanned by envy or malignity. He therefore sought to overtake and ascertain who had thus obtruded on their privacy. He however could not verify his suspicions, for the stranger escaped him. He once caught a distant view of the features, and he thought they resembled those of John de Waldenrod, who had lately sought his friendship.

CHAPTER XI.

DURING the time that intervened before Mary's departure for the French court, an uninterested spectator might have supposed that the Princess had forgotten her friendship for the minstrel, as their usual familiar interchange of thought and sentiment was completely interrupted. Mary seemed to be entirely engrossed by preparations for the change in her situation, and the minstrel, by his own reflections. Yet a more accurate observer might have noticed the rapid change of colour upon the pale cheek of Adenez, when Mary spoke of her departure ; and the close knit brow would perhaps have disclosed that his feelings upon the subject were neither lukewarm nor pleasant. If the Princess on her part seemed regardless of the presence of her poet, yet her eye invariably detected his departure, and perhaps a light sigh followed him.

At length the dreaded moment arrived ; and, accompanied by her brother and many of the

nobles of his court and followed by a numerous train of attendants, Mary left Brussels. As long as she could distinguish the dark towers which rose, side by side, in frowning majesty above the stately church, which covered the ashes of St. Gudule, she continued to gaze on them, but when a turn of the road hid them too from her sight, she stopped her horse to take a last farewell of the spot where she had been so happy. "Adieu!" she cried, "land of my love with this view vanishes all hope of future peace!" Tears choked her voice, and she wept for some moments with a bitterness which resisted consolation. Her brother sought in vain to turn her mind towards the pleasures, splendour, and honours that awaited her. She found it impossible to shake off the dark presentiment which obscured every glance towards the change in her situation.

It was only on the fourth day they approached Paris; not, as now, great in architectural magnificence, for the houses were generally of wood, thatched, low, and without chimneys. Nor did the dwellings of the great exhibit that style of lofty grandeur which the next century produced, and which Mary's own town already partially ex-

hibited. But Mary was young, and endued with that happy flexibility of character which usually attends sensibility and genius. (Are they not but different modifications of the same disposition?) Her sadness faded away before the indications of joy and gladness with which her approach was every where hailed. The whole population, nobles, students of the university, and common people, all poured out beyond the walls to meet their young and talented Queen, yielding themselves up to that enthusiasm of feeling, that fondness for loving an anticipated good, for which the Parisians were ever remarkable. Her fears and dark forebodings were dispelled by the contagion of sympathy; and with a glad and lightsome heart she bowed her head in return to these acclamations, till it almost touched the neck of her beautiful Spanish jennet, as she penetrated the thick crowd, which, while it welcomed her approach, impeded her progress. All was pleasure; and when she descended at the steps of the palace where Philip waited her approach, suitably attended to receive her, he found her countenance radiant with joy, and his heart assured him that the tremor of

her voice was not solely caused by maidenly sensibility.

Having partaken of the refreshments prepared on tables magnificently spread, the harpist prepared to offer to the princess the homage of his talents. The first chords he struck recalled her thoughts and concentrated her feelings, and she availed herself of the first opportunity to retire. In her own room, with only Jane d'Assche present, and the short excitement created by the tumultuous acclamations with which she had been received having passed away, she sank on her bed half drowned in tears.

Jane, astonished at this sudden alteration, approached, and tenderly embracing her, entreated to be informed of the reason for her emotion. "O Madam," she continued, "what more can you want to be perfectly happy? What can you desire beyond what lies at your feet? I am sure his Highness is very handsome, and not so much—so *very* much older than you are; and oh! what a beautiful aigret in his cap! And then how polite the gentlemen of his court! I hope they will make Adenez soon resemble them!"

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the Princess, with an emphasis that made Jane start. "Let me feel that there is one at least about me who carries in his countenance the true expression of his heart's real meaning. Let me at least have the conviction that one remains to me who loves me for myself, not for what I may bestow!"

"Nay, madam," she replied, "if he were indeed like what he was when he first came from Wavre, we might pass over his want of gallantry. He was then gay as a lark, always making verses in praise of your talents, and of my—bright eyes," she continued with a coquettish laugh and a natural blush which heightened her beauty, radiant as it was, "but now——"

"He is thoughtful, my dear Jane, that's all. He likes not to quit Brussels, with its sublime cloisters and sequestered greenwood shades. In truth, what is there here to recompense him for such a loss? Gaudy apparel, hollow smiles, and courtly compliments!"

"Courtly indeed, madam," replied the literal Jane. "Know you what the Grand Chamberlain said to his lady when he presented me to her, not at all intending I should overhear

him? 'They judge right (he whispered) who say that the ladies of the Low Countries are the handsomest in the world, if this bewitching fairy is to be taken as a *fair* sample.' And indeed madam, the emphasis of his voice, and his looks, said yet more than his words, flattering as they were."

"Said you the Chamberlain Labrosse?" inquired Mary, awakening from her reverie.

"Yes, madam! So courteous and so——"

"False," said the Queen, with a half shudder, finishing the sentence which the vain and unsuspecting girl had commenced. "I know not how it is, but my very heart revolts from that man.—Saw you the look he cast on Adenez?" she inquired after a pause.

"No, madam," replied Jane, with a dimpling smile and coquettish glance, "but I know what he said."

"And what did he say, my dear Jane?" inquired the Princess goodnaturedly, prepared by her own observation and her companion's manner, for some flattering compliment to the damsel.

"Why, madam, when Adenez was named, he

fectly new, prepared for the occasion; and to such a pitch had the luxury of the times arrived, that their dresses were changed three times in one day, and each change shewed a robe more splendid than the last.

All the different liveries followed in procession — before the windows of the palace, each bearing in front the banner indicating its profession.

But the most prominent feature in the novelties of the day were the little theatres, erected at each corner where streets crossed; and when the cloth curtains, of Brussels manufacture, were withdrawn, various scenes were represented; such as the infancy of the dramatic art, then newly introduced from the East, might be supposed to furnish: but with the idea, little of the poetical inspiration which the poets of the East, beyond any other in the early ages, had displayed, was observable. Drawn from a source which supplied to the sister arts of poetry, painting, and music all that was sublime in conception or grand in execution, the mysteries, which consisted in facts drawn from holy writ, were arid and vulgar. The Saviour of the world was depicted eating an apple, presented to him by

St. Joseph and smiling in the arms of the Holy Virgin. The next scene discovered him repeating paternosters with the Apostles, and the last act in this rough picture, shewed Him raising up the dead to judgement.

In another of these representations the blessed were seen singing praises in Paradise, attended by angels with gaudy wings, and robes of the brightest cerulean blue; while in an opposite department, sinners were discovered writhing in eternal punishment, while devils, whose mouths flamed fire and brimstone, laughed in spite at their misery.

Those from the Old Testament shewed Adam and Eve, rambling hand in hand through the beautiful garden, eying with longing looks the luscious apples shining in all the tempting array of red with yellow streaks, through the bright green leaves of the loaded tree. Above, the serpent writhing round its stem, with upreared head and protruded tongue, as he gave his insidious counsel to the weaker vessel. The next act showed how, with beguiling words and yet more seducing looks, she tempted her loving partner to participate in her guilt; and her

punishment formed the subject of the last act of this eventful history.

In other theatres of similar form pieces called satires were enacted. One contained a wicked allusion to the Pope, (Boniface VIII.) who was personified under the emblem of a fox, whose cunning eye shewed rather mundane than spiritual desires. Reynard was at first a simple clerk, chanting an epistle; next a bishop's mitre graced his brow, while the same insidious glance, though cast on the earth in feigned humility, still betrayed a worldly ambition. At length his pointed ears were half concealed by a triple tiara, and his bushy tail peeped from beneath the magnificent robe of the Pope, while he no longer sought to conceal his carnal appetites, but devoured such dishes as the taste of the times denominated luxuries, with a marvellous rapidity.

Tom Fool then, as now, upon every popular occasion, seems to have taken a conspicuous part in the amusements of the multitude, capering, gambolling, and tumbling.

Then was a display of animals brought from the tropical climates, marching two and two in most orderly procession; the most unmanage-

able chained, and the fiercest muzzled. They were paraded from a building representing Noah's Ark.

Here was also a Lilliputian tournament, at which children tilted in knightly armour, brandishing their minniken spears.

And many were the groups of dancers that enlivened this motley assemblage, where ladies flourished à-la-ronde.

Fountains poured forth wine, at which the animated populace quaffed to the health of the beauteous queen, while they shouted "Largesse" to the bounteous giver, surveyed by groups of persons under different disguises, whose quaint appearance gave somewhat of the character of a modern carnival to the motley scene.

On the last day of this wedding festival the *bourgeoisie* of Paris marched in regular order from the church of Nôtre Dame, well armed and neatly dressed, to the number of thirty thousand foot, and twenty thousand horse, and defiled past the house where King Philip and his fair bride were stationed at the open window.

CHAPTER XII.

SHORTLY after the marriage of the young queen, Guy de Dampierre came to Paris.

Formerly, when his business or pleasure required his attendance there, Labrosse had always a convenient illness, or some mission beyond the walls, or such an immense overflow of business that any communication with Count Guy, beyond what his official duties as grand chamberlain imposed, seemed to be impossible. But now Labrosse himself sought his society ; and, as the desire of a private conference was mutual, they were soon closeted together.

The Count began by lamenting that the infatuation of Labrosse's father, in deserting the protection of the Lady of Hainault, his mother, had deprived him of the talents of the grand chamberlain, and his mother of the pleasure of heaping honours on one so deserving of much more than she could offer him. He then proceeded

to say, that notwithstanding the defection of the father, the son might yet reckon on his good offices if he could make up his mind to leave France; adding, with a sneer, "The favour of kings is uncertain, and there are those who prophesied that the honours of this court would for the future travel round by the way of Brabant."

Labrosse replied warily to this harangue. But, though his words expressed the most entire confidence in the goodness of the king, yet in his manner he suffered the Count of Flanders to perceive that he was not quite satisfied with his situation.

"Who," said Guy, looking steadily at the chamberlain, "is this Troubadour, this Adenez?"

"Who?" replied Labrosse, with such evident astonishment at the question that his companion could not for the instant believe it assumed. "Know you not that he is the queen's favourite minstrel, and brought by her from Brabant?"

"But," said the son of the Black Lady, "know you ought of his parentage and connexions?"

A simple reply in the negative convinced Guy of Labrosse's sincerity. But where then was this son of Ada? If against the evidence of all his senses, and of that strong internal conviction, resulting from so close a similarity that even the choice of words and the construction of phrases, as well as every action, struck on his wondering eyes and ears,—if this living image of her very self be not her son, where is the boy?

Lost and bewildered, he turned again to Labrosse, and asked,—“ Heard you ever your father speak of the last service the Lady Marguerite required at his hands, and which would have been most nobly requited had he not fled her thanks?”

“ Indeed, Count, my father conversed often upon the failure of that enterprise which caused his flight.”

“ How !” retorted Guy, with one of those dark looks he inherited from his mother. “ Do you trifle with me? Know you not that St. Louis himself was informed by your father of the existence of that boy?”

“ Stop, Count,” coolly interrupted the Grand Chamberlain; “ we begin now to understand

each other, and methinks may both be satisfied if we come to terms of mutual agreement. Give me but a sufficient pledge that when I want protection and support I shall find it in one of the Countess's extensive states; that I shall be aided by you and the noble Dame your mother in my own plans for vengeance, and *yours* shall not be neglected."

Guy joyfully caught at the idea. The preliminaries were soon arranged. His son, Queen Mary's pretty page, was sent with some of his retainers to his mother; and Guy himself feigned indisposition to colour his protracted residence at Paris. While thus confined, Labrosse, in furtherance of his plan, told the dénouement of poor Ada's story.

"When you, Count," he began, "brought the lady from the states of Brabant, and when he you left there had been also baffled in his attempts to find the partner of her guilt, it was intended, I believe, to keep the prisoner still in hopes of liberation, till her other victim was also in the power of the Countess your lady mother, in order that her vengeance falling on both at once, might at the same time be full and signal.

In conformity with this plan, the attendants were instructed to indulge her in such fancies as might solace her confinement ; and that even all attempts to escape should apparently be encouraged, in the hope that the dean's retreat might by this means be discovered. But notwithstanding every effort on the part of those in waiting, the lady seemed to lose alike her hopes and spirits. She grew more and more feeble, her cheek became paler, and the darkest melancholy obscured her life. In short, every symptom of some internal malady appeared.

“ My father, who, besides his ability as a surgeon, enjoyed some reputation as a skilful leech, was called in to prescribe for her ; and he soon discovered that she was far advanced in pregnancy. Then the poor lady entreated him with sighs and tears to conceal this circumstance from the countess. My father promised all she desired, but he did not forget his duty to the countess, for immediately upon quitting his patient he proceeded to inform the Lady Marguerite of what had passed.

“ How often has he described to me the fearful triumph which sate upon my lady's brow,

when she understood the situation of her victim, — what rich rewards she promised him, when the whole nest of vipers should be crushed together !

“ Won by my father’s artifice and the deep sympathy he expressed in her misfortunes, the lady wrote a letter to the King of France, which she entrusted to his care, under a promise that my father would himself take the child to Paris, and place him under Louis’s protection. He went directly to the Lady Marguerite, and discovered to her the project of her prisoner.”

“ But she knew not of the letter ?”

“ She knew *not* of the letter, Count. At length the child was born ; and by the desire of the Lady Marguerite, my father was at his post to receive it. He had just wrapped it closely in his cloak, when a Templar came up and inquired what he was doing there ? My father was lightly armed. The Templar insisted upon seeing his burden. He took the child from my father, and instantly disappeared with his infant burthen—’tis all I know.”

“ Infamous liar and scoundrel !” said Guy ;
“ dare you attempt to impose this tale upon

me? Know to your shame the king acknowledged having received the child—where then is it placed? Disappoint again my vengeance, and——”

“Fair and softly, Count Guy. Let me finish my tale, and you will find nothing inconsistent with this acknowledgment of the king. When the child was thus snatched from my father’s grasp, just at the moment when he thought his fortune made, the fear of the anger of the countess paralysed every faculty. This was two hours before midnight; ere any suspicion could be excited by our absence, he, with my mother and myself, then also an infant, were far on our road to Paris. And then it was that my father communicated to my mother his design to present me as the child of the Lady Ada. And the imposition was the easier, because in her letter the lady stated no recent particulars, but referred to my father for all information on that subject. It briefly recapitulated her early faults and sorrows.

“My father therefore sent the letter to the king, and easily obtained admission to his pre-

sence ; supported his interrogations, and made a most pathetic appeal to his heart in behalf of the orphan boy. He stated also, the imminent danger in which the life of the child would be placed, should the ‘ Black Lady ’ discover its retreat. My father, therefore, received the royal commands, that I should be brought up as Labrosse’s child—he supposing the Lady Ada to be my mother. That, to set aside all suspicion, I should be educated to succeed to his situation, and he was made surgeon to the king. He commanded also that I should be privately taught, besides, all that might prepare me to fill a situation in the state, better fitting my supposed birth and connexions. I think also, his Grace wrote to the Lady Marguerite to implore her clemency for Ada.”

“ He did !—And was he not privy to her escape ? ”

“ Escape !—And did the poor Ada indeed escape ? ”

“ The poor Ada ! You are—deny it not—you are in truth that son ? ”

“ Would to God I had that honour ! Then I should not be so killingly alive to the con-

temptuous glances with which the queen thinks fit to greet me. But had you seen my father's tears when he spoke of her anxious cares about this infant!—But how was her escape effected?"

"Why, have you not heard of her disappearance?"

"My father was made acquainted with it, but always thought that the fearful Lady Marguerite, exasperated that the child escaped her vengeance——"

"No, my lord chamberlain; her plan was so cunningly laid, that it appears no one about her suspected her intentions. She fretted much that she received no tidings of her child; and wept when the attendants, who were about her at his birth, were removed; a precaution taken by the Countess from the belief that they were in league with your father. And one morning she disappeared. Neither servant nor sentinel could give any information by which to trace her. Sometimes we think she destroyed herself, but no traces of her remains were ever found."

The continuation of this conversation was made up by a discussion of the plans to be pursued in furtherance of their schemes. The first

object was to discover if Adenez were indeed the son of Ada and to seek some means to destroy the king's confidence in Mary. Labrosse was particularly desirous to crush them both at one blow.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE sensibility which Mary had displayed as she received the flattering testimonies of approbation which seemed to emanate from the whole French nation, together with the deep feeling evinced by her when the king had recommended his children to her tenderness, had created in his bosom a most ardent attachment, which the graces of her mind could not fail to ripen into passionate love.

Unhappily for the queen, hers was a character which, though sure to be loved by those who knew her intimately enough to comprehend the beautiful singleness of her mind, was not constituted to be generally popular. She was exceedingly high-minded, and scorned by any trickery to solicit the approbation she was conscious of deserving and ought to command. She treated the openly worthless with contempt; the weak with indifference; and this necessarily reduced those she admitted to her familiarity to

a very small number, as none were found among them but such as were eminently distinguished for worth or talent. Of favourites she had very few, for she was fastidious alike from principle and feeling. She desired to be considered the protectress of virtue and the patroness of talent; and as a taste for learning had been encouraged under the late king, it rendered her fostering care very grateful to a little society lately risen up in France, under the name of the "Gay Society of the Seven Troubadours."

Schools of rhetoric, in which verse appears to have been cultivated with more zeal than success, had been established very early in Belgium; indeed one at Alost dates from A. D. 1107. These societies probably owed their foundation to troubadours from the east, brought here by Crusaders, as their uncouth efforts were almost exclusively devoted to celebrate the exploits of these soldiers of the Cross. And certainly nothing could be more likely to awaken the slumbering imagination than the fanciful imagery of those southern climes, grafted upon the wild legends of northern Europe. Indeed, the knightly character itself could only have been formed by

such a mixture of empassioned feeling and wild barbarity, when the chevalier rushed, in the name of God, Our Lady, and St. George, to cut the throat of one who had never injured him.

At the termination of the manifestations of joy which hailed her arrival with so much splendour, she received a deputation from the society just mentioned, the idea of which had been borrowed from her country, to lay at her feet the golden violet, the emblem of the art to which they were devoted.

She received the deputation with much state. At her right was the Rector of the University of Paris, then holding a rank even with the princes of the blood. Adenez was at her left hand, and the Sieur de Joinville, the historian of the sainted king, was supported by him.

The deputation was introduced, and the golden violet, presented by its president, was received by the princess with evident pleasure.

Adenez, in the midst of all the happiness and honour which seemed to court his acceptance, was restless and unhappy. It was as if a presentiment of misery weighed down and oppressed his soul. Was it that distaste for life, that dis-

tain for every thing within the grasp of man, which so frequently oppresses those endued with superior mental powers? Or was it, that having fixed his affections on one who could neither understand nor appreciate his character, he was now first awakened from his delusive hopes?—I know not. It is true, that dazzled by the extraordinary beauty of Jane, he had too hastily arrayed her in all the splendid colouring of a lively imagination. In her love he had expected a balm for every sorrow, in her mind he had looked for counsel; for in Brabant she had been modest, affectionate, and natural; but her head seemed to be completely turned by the homage offered to her beauty, and she had become selfish, coquettish, and vain. The lady of the grand chamberlain had aided Labrosse's endeavours to wean her from Adenez and from her fidelity to the queen.

Thus mutual discontent took place of the confidence which formerly reigned between them; and the chamberlain foresaw but little difficulty in inducing her to fill the place he had intended for her in the tragedy he was preparing.

Adenez, though no fanatic, was deeply im-

pressed with the truths of a religion which then held so prominent a place in the actions and destinies of mortal men. At that time none professed an indifference they did not feel ; for to be indifferent was accounted disgraceful ; and no mind harboured a conception that among its professing members avowed enemies to its pure precepts could be found.

The minstrel had been attending the first mass very early in the morning, when he was struck by the appearance of a man closely wrapped in a mantle, and who had twice passed him at a very short distance. Having thus attracted his attention, the stranger approached him yet more closely ; and lowering his voice almost to a whisper, he inquired, if he desired to know aught of his birth, wrapt as it was in such deep mystery. Adenez started : for content with a fate which seemed happier than that of all around him, he had scarcely remarked that those by whom he had been patronized had no natural claims on his heart. The question surprised him ; and he paused, unable to reply. He turned towards the stranger, as if in expectation that he should continue the conversation

he had begun in so extraordinary a manner. The latter seemed to understand his appeal, and was about to answer, when a third person coming up, he again passed Adenez, saying, in a very low but distinct voice, "Be in the Rue St. Jacques to-night at eight." And he walked rapidly away.

The circumstance acted in a most extraordinary manner upon the mind of Adenez. In proportion as he had before been indifferent to the early events of his life, he now became alive to the feeling of loneliness in the world, which his perception of the want of any connexion, however remote, occasioned. He retraced in his mind every circumstance, whether of pleasure or of pain, that had attended his youth; but he could not collect the remotest idea of any thing which could call for an interference such as that he had encountered. As soon as a circumstance so extraordinary, acting upon an enthusiastic and romantic mind, could allow sufficient calmness, he demanded an audience of the queen; and when the requisite forms of etiquette upon his introduction were over, he asked a mo-

ment's private audience, and then abruptly inquired, "If she knew aught of his parents?"

"Nay, now, Sir Adenez," replied the queen, with much sweetness. "Are not Brabant's rulers your parents, and am not I your sister?"

"Your grace is always too good," replied the bard, while his eye glistened with the emotion that agitated his heart. "But even your condescension, my gracious queen, cannot make me forget that I have this morning been most painfully reminded how entirely unknown to me are those to whom I owe my being."

The queen paused an instant. "And to me also," she replied in a low tone, after some minutes' reflection, as if the reply was an answer to her own reminiscences, rather than the inquiries of Adenez, which she appeared to have forgotten; and he almost forgot them himself as he gazed upon Mary's countenance, where the various thoughts that chased each other so rapidly in her mind left their impression on a face so beautiful in all those feelings that render woman lovely. "How I love to see you think!" was once said under similar circumstances, and per-

haps, though not said, some such reflection kept the troubadour silent. At length his royal mistress spoke. "Indeed, Sir Bard," she said, "I have not the slightest recollection that I ever heard them mentioned. But why does the idea now recur to you, when so many years have passed in happy ignorance?"

Adenez could only detail his extraordinary rencontre in the morning, which interested and astonished the queen. "But surely, Adenez," said she, her curiosity fading away before a recollection of the Beguine's strange prophecy, and which a conversation so mysterious recalled to her mind.—"Surely you will not go to the place appointed?"

"Your Grace," replied the Bard, with cheeks glowing and eyes sparkling from the emotions thus created, "who have received the fond pressure of a mother's lips, and who have been reared beneath the sunny smiles of paternal tenderness, can have no idea of the tumultuous feeling which rushes to the heart when it first comprehends the possibility of having a new and powerful tie added to its other enjoyments. A

ment, he next turned them towards his guide, who having thrown aside the mantle in which his long lean form was enveloped, discovered a Jewish countenance, in which the long hooked nose and keen rambling eyes were very marked and striking. His hair was black and frizzled, his beard bushy, his ears large. But what was most particularly striking was the immoderate length of his hands and feet, and the extreme looseness of his joints, which gave a tottering air to his gait. His teeth were as pearls, white and regular, but set within a pair of lips so pale and skinny that the mouth added to the singular deformity of the person.

“I am here,” said Adenez, finding his companion made no effort to commence a conversation.

“Now what would you?”

“Nay, Sir Minstrel,” said the creature, grinning malignantly, “it is not I—it is you who are come here to unravel a mystery.”

“A mystery! And what mystery, stranger, can attach to my existence?”

“Go seek it in the church if thou wouldst know thy father!”

“My father! In the church!—Explain!”

"Thy father was a deacon in the church of Laon.—Thy mother was his ward."

"O Heaven! hearest thou this blasphemous untruth! My birth is infamous, say'st thou?—And what proof canst give to strengthen this outrageous accusation?"

"The mark upon thy right arm, as if a powerful hand had grasped the limb and left a rough impression there. Perchance,"—he added in a lower tone, "the grasp may be resumed!"

Adenez stood aghast; for such a mark too sure he bore upon him. Yet startled as he was at the appalling accuracy of information in the wretch before him, he could not admit the notion that aught super-human accompanied this knowledge. "Wretch," he cried, "some slave hath told thee of this mark!"

"Slave! no," repeated the man, hoarsely laughing. "Ask the Templar who bore thee in his arms to Brabant's duke."

"A Templar, say'st thou? And was the Templar tall, prince-like, and noble?"

"Tall, prince-like, and noble"—was echoed back, but now it was not his guide that spoke.

"T'was not you that spoke?" cried Adenez,

turning to his guide. The man shook his head mysteriously.

“Nay then, 'tis Echo that mocks me.—Tell me more, stranger.—Nay, tell me *all*—My mother lives?”

“Lives,” replied the voice that had before spoken.

He turned again to his guide. “I have no more to tell,” he said in answer to this mute appeal. “Go seek your parents, and when they are found, come here again.—Farewell!”

CHAPTER XIV.

WE must not attempt to describe the agitation into which the mind of Adenez was thrown by his interview with the sorcerer, for such he felt himself compelled to believe the stranger. He would have given the world to be allowed to vent his feelings, by wandering alone throughout the night, for he felt oppressed by a nervous difficulty of breathing, which became stifling when subjected to the confinement of the palace; but the commands of the queen were imperative, and he was compelled to appear before her, to give her the expected account of his mission.

Had he been less absorbed by his own emotions, he might have observed the air of malicious satisfaction with which the chamberlain ushered him into the presence of his gracious mistress, who, though surrounded by her maidens, was solely occupied with Jane.

Mary, whose feelings had been wound up to the highest pitch by the protracted absence of

her minstrel, almost started when he presented himself before her, while Jane put forth her smiling face as if to welcome him. He only noticed her by a motion of his hand, as if to repulse her from him, while approaching the queen he said he had something for her grace's private ear. Mary preceded him to a recess of one of the windows, while the singular agitation which both discovered, and the words that reached her attendants, though few, bespoke high interest by their import. "Son"—"King"—"Brabant's duke"—"St. Louis"—"Escape" and "prison."

At the termination of their conference, Mary appeared scarcely less agitated than her bard; and on his taking leave, he was invited to repeat his visit on the following morning.

When they met they were both less agitated than on the preceding evening; but the deepest melancholy was visible on the countenance of Adenez, and the truest sympathy was imprinted on that of Mary. The result of this conversation, was a letter despatched by the queen to her brother the Duke of Brabant. Mary then endeavoured to discover from her young page

William de Béthune, who was the Templar to whom he had introduced Adenez. But the page only knew him to be a friend of the Lady Marguerite, and could only name him by the epithet of Sir Hildebrand, by which he had inquired for him. Nothing seemed capable of soothing Adenez. The lovely Jane in vain tried her powers of fascination. He spoke plainly of the impossibility of their union. She deemed it want of affection on his part; and his declaration of inability to fulfil his engagements as a studied insult. Alas! his heart was ulcerated. The son of a servant of the Holy Church! of an adulterous intercourse! He seemed to himself to be an outcast from society; even his harp ceased to possess any charms, and he gave himself entirely up to the melancholy aberrations of a wounded spirit.

In the mean time, the lady of the chamberlain sought by every means in her power to gain the confidence of the young Jane d'Assche, and to work upon her jealousy if possible, that she too might take a part in the tragedy about to be performed. The most soothing flattery was employed; and when the king's admiration of

beauty was, as if by chance, the topic of conversation, it was remarked, that *her* style of person was what pleased him most particularly.

The change in the character and manners of Adenez was then adverted to. "And was the Troubadour always so sad and dreamy, as he has been since the queen's marriage?"

"O no. At least I think not. He used to be very gay at Brabant."

"And were the Princess and the bard as much together before she came to France as they are now?"

"You know they were brought up and always studied together. The queen taught Adenez to make poetry, and Adenez taught the Princess to play the harp."

"But was he so *very* devoted as he is now, when he seems to forget every body that he may gaze on the queen?—Ah, the king has eyes for other beauty!"

Jane smiled. "And when he called me beautiful, do you think he was as sincere as he seemed to be in manner ~~as~~ well as in look?"

"Could you but have seen his highness, when he a dozen times repeated it to me, you

would not ask the question. If he could but know, that the queen likes nothing but literature, and music and musical people, no doubt his eyes would be opened !”

But here their conversation was interrupted by the arrival of William, who desired Jane to go to the queen.

The extraordinary resemblance between the nun who had obtruded herself upon the Princess and him who now seemed motherless, with a mother perhaps in existence, had often recurred to Mary ; and now that the nun had been again forced upon her remembrance by the strange combination of passing events, the likeness again struck upon her imagination with romantic force. The dream too which followed her extraordinary prophecy, was again thought of ; and the queen could not resist the belief that this mysterious woman and Adenez were, though unknown to each other, in reality closely connected. She had no one about her who had seen the nun except Jane d'Assche ; and however little she approved the change in that young lady's manner and character, the want of somebody with whom to speak in Adenez's absence of the

circumstance which now so engrossed her attention, induced her to summon this fickle and frivolous confidant.

In reply to the Princess,—“She had,” she said, “remarked the prophetess, but had never seen any body like her! No—she was sure she had never seen any one with such large—such very large black and fiery eyes; but as to the voice,—yes, she admitted that when Adenez was out of temper, (a rare occurrence,) he certainly spoke something like her.”

This was very unsatisfactory to the queen. She pursued the conversation no further; but such as it was, it was reported to the grand chamberlain and his lady, and they took care to avail themselves of the opportunity to incite the foolish girl to invite the queen to visit the sorcerer, who could doubtless inform her of what she wished to know. The queen’s suspicion of a resemblance between Adenez and the nun, was at first treated as the vision of a woman in love, who sees a likeness to the object of her passion in every thing; it was subsequently turned to another purpose. Mary, though superior in the cultivation of her mind to the generality of wo-

men, had in every thing which concerned the sensibilities of her sex all the weakness of the most tender among them. And it can consequently be no wonder if she, in common with the most enlightened of her time both in rank and reputation, had a strong tendency to superstition. She acceded to the suggestions of Jane ; determined to pay a visit to the sorcerer.

She invited her confidant to accompany her ; but Jane, who really intended and wished it, had yielded to the suggestions of the chamberlain and his wife, and therefore pretending fear declined the proposal.

As Mary did not choose to have her weakness, for such she was obliged to confess it, known to the whole court, she only commanded the attendance of her woman, with Adenez for a guide. She was much struck with the solitary and desolate appearance of the place in the midst of so populous a city, and she entered it with a cold shudder.

The sorcerer was there.

Mary, who of course did not wish to be recognised, was dressed like a citizen's wife,—in those

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days each class in society carried in its apparel evident marks of its station,—and when she appeared at the low door of the dwelling, the sorcerer greeted her with these inauspicious words: —“ Enter Madam, for fate, like death, can make all equal—the beggar and the king. What would you here ?”

“ I come,” said Mary, trying to speak with calmness, “ to inquire if I am again to see a female who once appeared to me, and who greatly interested me by her divinations ?”

“ And who spoke of misery and death ?”

“ Ha ! ” said the queen, “ know *you* too that ?—And who then is this female ?”

“ Methinks there be one nearer you than I am, who might better answer that question.”

Adenez started ! “ How ! ” exclaimed Mary.

“ Lady,” replied the sorcerer, mysteriously, while the nasal drawl with which he spoke became even more grating upon the ear, “ We wait only your consent to reply to all your questions. But as there is now a counteracting power at work, incantations, spells, and calculations are necessary. Put your questions upon virgin parch-

ment, and the reply shall be written," he continued, lowering his voice, "in the blood of a deadly enemy!"

Mary shuddered with horror, as she turned from him to Adenez, whose calmness astonished her. In reply to the sorcerer's speech, she could only look her repugnant refusal; but Adenez exclaimed impatiently: "And who dares to be the enemy of the queen?"

"He," replied the man, looking cautiously round; and speaking again in a low whisper, while he emphatically paused on each word, he uttered—"He who has dared from his birth to take the place, the riches, and risks of another, till danger approached, and then——"

"And what then?" said Adenez, impatiently.

"And then," continued the sorcerer, "in the hope of the better supporting his perilous career, he made a confidant of him who sought his downfall."

This description was conclusive, though vague. Both Adenez and the queen now knew who was her enemy.

CHAPTER XV.

No sooner had Queen Mary quitted the sorcerer's den, than another female habited in a similar manner appeared. She bore in her hand a purse of gold ; she wrapt her veil closely about her face and figure as she entered, and she looked cautiously round while she whispered to the unhallowed master, that she was a messenger from *her* who had just left him, who had commissioned her to say that she spoke but half her errand, for that she expected another and a greater service than any she had hinted at from him.

“ By the black spell,” grumbled the person addressed, “ she has asked but little yet. What would she ?”

“ Know you her who came in the semblance of a citizen's wife ?”

“ If you doubt my power,” he surlily replied, “ why are you here ?”

“ At any rate the weight of this purse,” said

his visitor, "may tell you she is somewhat more than she seemeth."

"What would you, or she, for it matters not which, since you bring that to make the cauldron bubble?"

"Ay," replied his guest, in a voice tremulous from some emotion badly suppressed, "then you know my errand?"

The sorcerer cast his penetrating eyes upon the speaker, and his inquiring glance had the effect of making her wrap her veil yet more closely around her, but the purse trembled in her hand. —"Speak!" he gruffly cried.

"There be those who stand in the way of her who is just gone," said the veiled female, mysteriously.

"And their removal might benefit others rather than herself," replied the sorcerer, ambiguously.

"True," said the female, after a pause.—
"*Children*——"

The man smiled contemptuously,—"'Tis a drug you seek?"

The woman presented the purse.

“ Speak, woman,” said the wretch, imperiously, “ What do you ask ?”

The woman started, her voice faltered. “ For a child——”

“ Of eleven years of age,” said the man, taking the purse. He quickly mixed two powders which he wrapt in a paper ; he then reached to one of the shelves and took down a gallipot, from which he scraped some unguent which he directed to be rubbed behind the ears, on the pit of the stomach, and on the soles of the feet, just before and after the powder had been administered.

The woman received the two parcels, but she yet lingered as if undecided.

“ What !” said the sorcerer, “ is your mission not yet complete ?” He marked her eye resting on a wax figure, only half formed. *His* instantaneously gleamed with yet fiercer brightness, while his skinny lips parting asunder disclosed his pearly teeth as he grinned in horrid satisfaction. “ Ha !” he cried, lengthening the monosyllable with horrid emphasis, as a hoarse laugh sounded hollow from his throat, without

however giving the slightest animation to any of his features.

“What sum?” asked the woman, in words so faintly uttered that a person less acquainted with the half-tones of those who plunge step by step into guilt would have found it difficult to comprehend.

“Why, for one so dignified, three times the value of this purse, each coin of which bears *the image* engraven on pure gold.”

The woman was so thrown off her guard by her agitation, that the veil was for an instant forgotten; it fell and partially discovered a low wide forehead, and black eye-brows so strongly marked that once seen they could not be forgotten. It was the head nursery maid of the young princes, who had been lately dismissed by the queen.

The man smiled grimly as he made this discovery, for this was not the first time he had seen her; having been led by Labrosse himself into the children's apartment, previous to the dismissal of this attendant, whose discharge had induced him to change his measures. She perceived his smile, and hastily replaced her veil.

“Be it so,” she continued. “You shall have what you demand, and that directly. A kingdom,” she continued, looking full at him, “is thus cheaply purchased.”

The lady of the chamberlain, pretending to discover some unfavourable symptoms about the eldest of the children, was in Mary’s apartments as she was retiring for the night. Her warm evening posset was brought in; the lady would hand it to her herself, and finding it, she said, not well prepared, she stirred it with the massive spoon lying on the salver on which it was presented, and invited the queen to drink it off at one draught, as it might promote the repose so likely to be disturbed by anxiety about the young prince. Mary, who in matters unconnected with her principles and feelings, was the most easily guided of human beings, followed her advice; and the suggestion of the lady was realized, by a sleep so long that it was not till the hour of dinner next day the queen was roused by her attendant, when she heard of the danger of the eldest of the princes, who was also her favourite.

Her grief and indignation, when she found

herself denied admission to the apartments of the children, may be better conceived than described. Yet she was entirely unsuspicious that any imputation of crime could be urged against her. Even when she sent a box of sweetmeats, and the gift had been refused by the attendants, she could not at all understand the motives which could have caused its rejection, which were no less than pretended fears lest its contents might be poisoned.

The young Louis died; and a guard was set over the queen. Then it was that Adenez set out upon his mission to Brabant.

The queen was thus placed in a situation in which, though she might assert, it was almost impossible for her to prove her innocence. A single and helpless female in a foreign country, new to its laws and institutions, without witnesses or counsellors, and with a very imperfect knowledge of the late transactions, possessing no means of knowing the seeming proofs that her enemies might adduce against her, ignorant even of the charges they made, the queen seemed inevitably lost, for it appeared impossible to contend with the array of state villains marshalled against her.

She was in this situation when the Sire de Joinville obtained, through the private friendship of the king, permission to visit her.

The old man wept as he approached, while he seized her outstretched hand and pressed it to his lips, and entreated her to inform him how he could serve her.

“ Send to my brother, my good Joinville, for it is only he that by God’s help can establish my innocence !”

“ By the sainted king,” exclaimed the good old man, “ whose servant I was for so many years, it shall be done, even if my head fall a sacrifice to this first want of fealty to the King of France—for if it be a step that Philip does not approve, he who under an oak for so many years administered justice to his poorest subjects would not refuse it to a princess !”

“ No, Sire Joinville !” replied the royal prisoner. “ And, further, you must understand that every memorial has been unnoticed, and every petition disregarded which I have been enabled to forward to him.”

“ That,” replied the historian, “ is no great wonder, since your only enemies had the presenting of them. Would that his father were yet

alive!" he continued. "Your wrongs then would soon be redressed."

"They would never have been inflicted," said the queen, indignantly.

"And have you asked to see the king?"

"Indeed I have solicited the permission to throw myself at his majesty's feet—and what was his reply?" she continued, vehemently.

"That such a measure could not in decency be allowed; that to admit into his august presence one accused of the"—(Mary shuddered as she continued) "the death of the poor innocent—the heir to the crown I think he said—was a thing unheard of.—They insisted that I must first disprove the accusation in full council; and then my lord the king would be the first to solicit an interview."

When Joinville heard this decision, he said, that much as he desired to have every circumstance elucidated in this dark business, he yet was compelled to object to the trial. "I cannot conceal from you, madam," continued he, "that there is at court a strong party against you, while you have but few friends of any weight in the council. Then again, who will superintend

the proceedings?—He who from the beginning has upon every occasion evinced his enmity against you. Who will be your judge?—He who from the first has suffered himself to be directed by the representations of your enemies, and who has constantly refused to attend to any thing that can be urged in your defence. It behoves you, madam, therefore to demand that your brother be present.”

“ My brother !” exclaimed the queen, passionately. “ He who had such a justifiable pride in the poor gifts with which nature hath endowed his sister !—Is it necessary that he too should see ~~any~~ ~~his~~ humiliation ?” and she wept bitterly.

“ His presence, madam, will encourage your friends to declare themselves, while it will intimidate your enemies. Let him and Labrosse choose each an equal number of nobles, to decide between you and the grand chamberlain. Little did the good King Louis imagine that in him whom he thus raised to be equal with the nobles of the land, he should find an enemy to his immediate successor !”

The good old man carried this proposal to the king, but it ill accorded with the views of the

wily chamberlain; and he induced the king to reply, "That the wife was subject to the husband, the same as was Brabant to France, as his superior lord; and that all controversies between the king and his vassals had ever been decided in the courts of the sovereign. That this right could not now be waved, without establishing a precedent which on some future occasion could not fail to be cited to the dishonour of the king."

This crooked policy roused the indignation of Mary, and wrung from her an expostulation, written with the dignity of a queen and the spirit of an innocent and injured woman. It ran thus:—

"Sire, and my Lord and Husband.

"If I do not weep, it is that the shame and anger at being thus dishonoured burn up the source of tears, and stifle all softer feelings. Let me then recall to your Highness, that when I left Brabant I relinquished without hesitation the guardianship of those whom nature had made to love me, content with the protection and trusting in the affection of your Highness; and if I am to be bereft of that which I had trusted

would be the guerdon of my honour and happiness, I have at least the right to ask that my brother may behold my trial and know the extent of my misery. The crown and comfort of my life, your Highness's favour, I feel to be gone; yet know not how it went. But if I be condemned upon surmises, I do tell you 'tis rigour and not justice. What I ask is, therefore, that the chamberlain be put in accusation, as I have been. Let him too be thrown into prison.—Let him be also deprived of all communion with his friends.—Let mine be allowed access to your Highness, and I am ready to wave all my rights as a queen, and meet him in a public court—to abide by the sentence of my lord and husband.”

All that Philip had heard from Jane of the mysterious Beguine had excited his interest; and embarrassed by the arguments of the queen's friends and the importunities of the grand chamberlain, he resolved, through the medium of the Beguine, to seek her interpretation of the mystery which seemed to envelope the death of his son.

He therefore declared that he could not receive Mary till her innocence had been proved.

But that in order to shew his extreme desire that justice might be done to both parties, he would appoint a deputation to wait upon the Beguine, whose prescience had been so clearly manifested to the queen.

Labrosse still retained influence enough to have the Bishop of Evereux appointed to this mission ; and he was accompanied by an abbé of mean capacity, a creature suited to do the basest bidding of a vile employer.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was on one of those evenings of early autumn so beautiful in the westerly parts of Europe, that a traveller passed through the forest of Soignies on his way to Brussels, which was then embosomed within its shades.

He was dressed in the green mantle so universally worn by the troubadours of that age; a hood of the same colour and material covered his head and concealed his features, together with the beautiful golden hair which fell in glossy ringlets on his shoulders.

The sun was setting, and its beams fell full upon the city, and shewed tower and turret in picturesque varieties of aspect, as the traveller, having passed the gate, crossed the wooden bridge to penetrate the island, in his way to the Borgval, where the ducal palace was then situated.

The city itself was calm, and the only sounds that interrupted the silence were sounds that

communicated pleasurable emotions. The loudest and most sonorous was that of the vesper bells, the call of which was answered by many a veiled figure, bearing in her hand "the rosary by sainted fathers blest"; while groups of children, earnest in their evening sports, barred up the narrow street.

But the traveller heeded neither the turret nor tower, whether it rose bright in the setting sun beam, or reposed in shadow,—nor did he hearken to the call of the church bell to prayer, though its deep and sonorous note would, at another time, have sunk deep into the minstrel's mind; the sports of the children were equally powerless to attract his attention, though they sometimes impeded his progress. Solely intent on urging forward his tired steed, he looked neither to the right nor to the left, till he alighted at the gate of the palace.

"Sir Adenez!" exclaimed the duke, as the stranger was ushered into the apartment where he was eating his late supper, for it was nearer eight than seven o'clock.

"Pardon, sire," said the stranger, approaching and dropping on one knee, while the hood

fell from his head and discovered the ingenuous countenance of the page William. "Pardon, if a most pressing occasion hath driven me to break through formal observances, and made me in a forced disguise appear to be in momentary forgetfulness of due respect."

"William!" cried the duke, evincing his surprise in the most undignified manner, by letting the morsel just half way between the plate and his mouth fall back to its former situation.—"What brings you here?"

"Most gracious liege," replied the page, "the most unwelcome duty that could bring a servant to the feet of his most honoured master. The queen to justify my mission bid me deliver this token, the golden violet, the 'Gay Society,' which your Highness will at once recognize as hers."

The duke took the violet, gazed on it intently; then seeing the agitated countenance of the page, dismissed attendants, and commanded him to speak.

"Would that this tongue had been for ever silent ere it had been forced to tell the saddest tidings that ever reached the ear of a brother

jealous of his sister's honour, peace, and happiness!"—

"How! A sister, said you? The queen!"
And the duke's voice faltered.

"Most noble duke—the joy and happiness that wanted wildly in the streets, and seemed to fill each patriot heart in France, when the glowing feeling excited by the matchless grace and talent of my royal mistress, had turned to cool indifference, or causeless jealousy——"

"O fickle nation! And the king?" exclaimed the duke.

"The king, I yet believe, would have fondly loved her, for it is not in human nature to resist the charms concentrated in her person and her mind. But her talents were too transcendent, her excellence created such an empire over his mind, that Labrosse lost all his influence."

"His barber favourite!" said the duke, contemptuously.

"The same, my liege. Among the virtuous enjoyments of the queen, she felt her chief delight in the society of the young princes; and sooth to say, they amply requited her care in duteous love and pleased obedience. Their head attendant was not pleasing to my noble mistress,

she was dismissed; but such was the unsuspecting dignity of the gracious queen that she made Labrosse name one to fill her place. Soon after this the eldest prince fell ill. The queen was refused admission to his chamber."

"But Philip?" said the duke impatiently, "knew he of this exclusion?"

"My liege, the facts are so strange, the truth so darkly shaded round by mystery, that I am quite unable to fathom it. They say that the graces of the Lady Jane have won upon the king, and that her easy temper hath been practised on to inflame his jealousy and utterly deceive him."

"Jane!" said the duke, in an accent of surprise.

"The queen," continued the page, "felt for the sick child, more than for her own indignities; and sent him a box of sweetmeats. The box was returned—the child was not allowed to accept it!"

"By St. Joseph," said the duke, rising in a rage, "that is too bad!—Some of them shall rue this!"

"If this so move you, my gracious prince," said the page, "how will you hear the end

of this incredible tale? — The young prince died!"

The duke, who had hitherto paced the room in much agitation, now stopped; and so intense was the heed he gave to the page's communication, that he scarcely drew his breath lest he should lose a word.

The page continued:—"Soon after his death the body was covered with livid spots; this created suspicion. Surgeons were called to examine the corpse; the same symptoms of foul play appeared internally,—no doubt existed but that the prince was poisoned!"—The page here covered his face with his hands, and vainly strove to conceal the tears that trickled from his eyes.

"Continue!" said the duke, furiously,—then, in a softer tone, "in pity finish this perfidious tale."

"O, sire! for words to communicate the truth you needs must know, but which my tongue refuses to utter——"

"They dare not!" said the duke, after a pause, in tones of concentrated and deep emotion, "They dare not accuse *her* of the crime!"

“ And whom has your noble sister there to screen her from their outrages?—whom, save Adenez the minstrel, and me a feeble page!—Her kindness to these princes had been so uniform, that they all doated on her very name;—her enemies, therefore, were forced to recur to charges of sorcery, and boldly declared that she had, by means of magical aid, destroyed the boys and practised on the life of the king. Unhappily, she did once visit an unholy practiser of forbidden rites——”

“ Go on,—go on!” said the duke, in a tone of suppressed anguish.—“ Why did she not send to me at once?”

“ O, my liege! Recall to your gracious thoughts the mind—the high, the noble spirit of the Princess. She long wept her trials in secrecy; her bearing, though grave, was dignified; her countenance, though sadly pale, was calm; her dimmed eye, her colourless lips alone indicated her sufferings.—But when the charges of her enemies were aimed at even her life——”

“ Her life? The life of my sister?”—exclaimed the duke, clenching his fist.

“ Then my gracious lord, Adenez left Paris

to inform you of these proceedings. He was arrested by an order signed by the king, who, urged by what influence or what motive I know not, declared he would leave the cause to the prophetess of Nivelles. Your grace remembers her sudden apparition at the palace?"

"But indistinct and vaguely did the rumour of such an event reach my ears," replied the duke. "But did King Philip know of it?"

"The Lady Jane knew of it, and saw her, and probably told him the whole affair."

"But you, William, why are you thus disguised?" asked the duke.

The page hung his head. Quick mantling blushes rapidly succeeded each other in rapid succession upon his ingenuous countenance. "Please your Highness, my—the Count of Flanders loves not Adenez, and I feared he might oppose my journey. Besides, your Highness knows 'tis by far the safest travelling dress. The violet——"

"What of the bauble?" asked the duke.

"The queen, my royal mistress, bid me keep and wear it," continued the page. "'And be

it,' she said, 'down to after times the signal of constant attachment and unshaken fidelity.'"

On these words, the badge was returned to him by the duke, who then swore with impetuous sternness, that before day-light on the following morning he would be on his road to Paris.

The page rejoined him at the appointed time. He found him attended by some of the boldest knights of his suite, among whom rode a Templar, whose dignified stature and lofty bearing instantly recalled to the apparent minstrel, his old friend Sir Hildebrand.

CHAPTER XVII.

As it was in the forest of Soignies, and close to Nivelles, that the Count of Flanders had seen the mysterious female, it was resolved to proceed to that town in order to obtain the necessary information as to her residence.

Nivelles was at that time celebrated for a very extensive Beguinage, with little else to recommend it to the attention of strangers. It was situate at the bottom of a valley in the bosom of the forest, but it did not then possess the extensive trade which has since brought so much wealth within its walls and luxury into the dwellings of its inhabitants.

On making the necessary inquiries, it was found that the person sought for did not belong to this community, though she was frequently in the neighbourhood of the town, wandering up and down like a troubled spirit. The nun, to whom the abbé addressed himself, either could not or would not say more.

The bishop then sent for the principal of the order. She was a woman of about fifty, tall and bony, without much expression in her countenance, but the little that shone there was indicative of extreme good nature. She entered the room where the bishop was sitting, evidently much flattered with the honour done her, but seemed frightened when the bishop pushed his inquiries respecting the prophetess. She said that the Beguine had foretold very strange things, but that when people went to put questions to her, she would seldom answer them. That she had no settled habitation, but that there was a cave, in the side of a hill, in the wood where she had been lately seen. The Beguine repeated this in a low voice; and while she spoke, her eyes wandered unquietly round her, as if in fear of finding the object there of whom she had dared to speak.

The bishop thought his dignity would be compromised by going to seek the Beguine; he therefore sent the abbé upon this mission. As the abbé walked slowly into the forest, pondering upon the difficulties of his search, he found the narrow path-way, overshadowed as it was

with thick forest trees, suddenly darkened to his view. He looked up, and trembled, and turned pale ; why, he scarcely knew, for that it was the object of whom he was in search who now stood before him, he could not doubt.

It was the tall figure of the Beguine, thin to emaciation, with the pale ghastly countenance, and the black eyes, dazzling in the spirit of prophecy. She looked towards him with an expression in which scorn and grief were blended. " Go," she cried, " and tell him that my heart seeth the wickedness of the unjust ; that there is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, till his abominable sin be found out. There are they fallen, all that work wickedness, they are cast down, and shall not be able to stand."

She then left him. He attempted to follow her, but she made a motion with her hand for him to stop : and he returned to the bishop to render an account of his interview.

The bishop could not conceal his vexation at the failure of the abbé. He took a guide to the cave that had been described to him, and

he there found the object which had so appalled his messenger. She was sitting in a cell formed of reeds, wood, and rushes, which covered the entrance to the cave. She appeared entirely absorbed in deep reflection.

As soon as she perceived the bishop and his attendants, she retired to the interior of the cave, nor could she be persuaded to leave it. He therefore followed her there, and remained nearly an hour; and when he returned, the abbé remarked that he wore an air of greater humility, and perhaps some disappointment was mingled with the softened tones of his voice, as he gave orders for their immediate departure.

Meantime the king became very impatient for the return of the deputation. And when the bishop's name was announced, he gave orders for his immediate admission.

After the usual compliments, the king kept silence for some time. His countenance was very pale, and the most marked agitation was visible upon his features. At length, finding the bishop did not speak, "What do you bring me?" he said.

"Please your grace," answered the bishop, "I have been able to draw nothing from her, except under the seal of confession."

"How!" said the king, frowning; "did I send you to confess her?" More he would have said, but at that moment a messenger introduced a herald, who announced in due form the arrival of the Duke of Brabant, his master, and demanded on his part, in peremptory terms, permission to see his sister.

When admitted to that sister, whom only two years before he had brought so pompously to the arms of her spouse, rejoicing the hearts of multitudes, welcomed by thousands, at whose approach every mouth wore a smile and every eye glanced gladness, and who now alone, in a damp, deserted cell, abandoned by the world and forgotten by those who did not cover her remembrance with reproaches, the warrior wept. He pressed her to his heart, then held her at a distance from him to view the alteration that tears and suffering had made on her countenance.

He then conversed long and amply on her present confinement and its cause, and was indignant when he learnt that no notice of what

she had been accused had been delivered to her. That all she knew was vaguely and from common report.

He had little difficulty in obtaining permission for her removal to her own apartments. He next demanded an audience of the king, when, after a long conversation, he threw down his gauntlet and challenged all who should accuse his sister to meet him in single combat.

No one answered to this appeal. Perhaps the friends of Labrosse feared the punishment which was decreed to those who were overcome. It was in truth frightful.

St. Louis, indignant at the frequency of these single combats, had established very rigorous laws in the hope of suppressing them. The combatants were compelled in the first place to suffer a very severe interrogatory, in the hope of eliciting the truth from one or the other; each was obliged to seal his declaration by an oath, and to listen to a solemn exhortation of the danger to the soul of the guilty. The funeral service was recited over them, as if there was no hope that either could quit the contest alive; and they were warned that the vanquished would be

dragged out of the lists by the feet, and then fastened to a gibbet. In short, in these judicial contests, every means were employed to induce one of the parties to desist.

If both knights persisted in desiring battle, the judges of the camp gave the signal, after again warning the combatants that the beaten would, whether dying or dead, be hanged.

Those who let themselves out for these "wagers of battle," were punished, in case of failure, equally with those who hired them.

The duke was embarrassed and indignant that his challenge to combat produced no result, and that no expedient could be thought of to re-establish his sister in the king's opinion.

The crafty chamberlain was well aware that having no knight to answer the Duke of Brabant's wager of battle, the queen was in the eye of the law cleared from the charges brought against her. If the king yet hesitated, he knew that it was upon other charges with which he had abused his ear, and he flattered himself that he had now collected sufficient circumstantial evidence to cause her, upon a new accusation, to

be condemned, if not to death, at least to perpetual confinement in a cloister.

He had hitherto succeeded in neutralizing the hatred which the "Black Lady" had vowed against him, as having aided the escape of the victim of her vengeance; for he was fully aware that as soon as he had openly become the queen's accuser, the Count of Flanders would have ranged himself as her defender, could he have hoped by criminating Labrosse to induce the king to give him up to Marguerite's demands. He had, by avowing himself to be the son of Labrosse, and not of Ada, as he had declared to the king, while he pointed out Adenez as that son, turned his vengeance from himself to another victim. But it was far from his intention, by giving up Adenez into the hands of the count, to gratify Marguerite's vengeance, and to endanger the loss of the king's protection, which he knew was extended to the son of Ada and Bouchard, (in conformity to a vow which his father the king had rigorously exacted,) rather than to himself. When, therefore, Adenez was sent by the queen on the mission to her brother,

it was necessary to interrupt a journey during which it would be so easy for Guy to possess himself of his person. He therefore persuaded the king to sign with his own hand an order to commit the bard to prison, upon charges which we shall hasten to explain. The friends of the queen, who were more than ever anxious for the arrival of the Duke of Brabant, consented, upon the earnest entreaty of the page, William, to let him take the mission intended for Adenez, and in order to conceal his plans from his father, he went disguised as a minstrel; and as his height was much the same as that of Adenez, he borrowed one of his dresses and in this disguise reached Brussels.

It will be remembered that the head nursery-maid had been removed from the prince's apartments previous to his death. She was closely confined in prison, without knowing with what offence she was charged; but, as soon as the Duke had thrown down his gauntlet to challenge the accusers of his sister, the grand chamberlain, to excuse his not accepting by his deputy this gage of defiance, taxed Mary in conjunction with the head nursery-maid and her Troubadour, Adenez

Lekoi, of sorcery and magic, which accusations being proved, would of course exonerate him from the necessity of accepting the challenge.

He had caused the sorcerer, his wife, and servant to be arrested; and a day was fixed for the trial. The crime of which Mary was charged, was that of practising charms to affect the life of the king. A figure in wax was produced, said to have been intended as a resemblance of Philip. It was pierced to the heart with a needle, mutilated, and bloody; and it was supposed that when their incantations were fully accomplished, the needle which had pierced the heart of his effigy would be as a dagger in the heart of the king; that the wound would be mortal, and the victim would die! Before the day of trial the sorcerer was found dead in his prison, accused by his enemies of having hanged himself; but there was more appearance of his having been strangled. This pretended suicide was construed into a proof of his guilt; and the king was prayed to fix a day for his judgment, but instead of granting this request, the superstitious and wavering monarch insisted upon employing another deputation to the Beguine.

It may appear strange that the wily chamberlain, whose influence over the mind of the king must have been perceived, should suffer deputation after deputation to be sent to a subject of the Duke of Brabant, for such the Beguine appeared to be ; but he had in the last mission perceived that the Beguine really believed herself to be his mother, and trusting to this circumstance, he had no doubt of her declaration of his innocence, which, taking into consideration the queen's belief in the truth of her prophetic mission, he hoped would go far to fix on Philip's wavering mind a confirmation of his innocence ; and he trusted by this means to send Mary back to Brabant, and to decide Adenez's destiny at once.

When the duke came to Brussels, he brought a Templar in his train, who was now named as principal of the mission. Though Labrosse was annoyed and somewhat uneasy at this unexpected nomination, yet he did not altogether despair. He had pondered over the prophecy to which the queen had lent her ear previous to her coming to Paris, and which Jane had repeated to him

and found in it every motive for consolation. A tragical termination was pointed out, death it was declared would attend her at Paris :—that prophecy must then point to the queen or to Adenez, for the queen knew not him when she listened to it.

The deputation proceeded as rapidly as possible towards the forest of Soignies, and advanced to the cave. At the sound of their horses' feet, the Beguine approached the door of her cell. She was very pale, and her large and wandering eye had lost its fire ; her head too, instead of being turned towards heaven, as if to seek its high behests that she might declare them, now fell dejectedly on her breast, while with a low and broken voice entirely divested of that fitful enthusiasm which had seemed to vouch the truth of her prophecies, she repeated :—" I am weary of my groaning, every night I wash my bed, and water my couch with tears.

" Thou hast said let mine enemy persecute my soul and take me, for the Lord is known to execute judgments, the ungodly is trapped in the work of his own hands."

Here she crossed her arms upon her breast, and seemed to forget that any stranger was present.

The Templar made a signal for his suite to retire, but retained one among them near to him. "Woman!" at length he said, in an authoritative voice, "thou, who hast devoted thyself to fasting and prayer to make atonement for the sins of thy youth, in the face of thy Sovereign Judge, when the past equally with the future is opened to thy enlightened vision, why hast thou abstained from declaring the innocence of her who is falsely accused, and the guilt of him who destroyed the heir of the French crown?"

She lifted up her head as the Templar spoke. His words no longer seemed to penetrate and shake her soul, as the remonstrance or the reproach of mortal man, but rather to fall upon her ears as an admonition from Heaven; and she cast her eyes upwards, while both hands were raised as if to give effect to the inspiration of her spirit. "The statutes of the Lord are right and penetrate the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure and giveth light unto the eyes."

These words seemed the out-pouring of her soul, not the mere rhapsody of an enthusiast, but as if communing with her own heart, she sought inspiration from a higher source. Then turning towards the Templar, she continued:—
“ Say to the king, Upon his right hand did stand the queen, in a vesture of gold, wrought about with divers colours. But not more glorious her vesture than the heart they covered; nor more pure the molten gold of her crown than was her mind from the guilt, than was her spirit from the imagination, of the crime imputed to her. Let her therefore again stand before the Lord’s anointed, in raiment of needle-work. With joy and gladness let her be brought into the palace of the king. And tell the queen——”
But here the fire of her eye was quenched, and its spirit became darkened, her arms sunk powerless by her side, and she dropped exhausted upon the bank beside her.

“ Ada !” said the Templar, when he saw her slowly recovering.

“ Who calls her that once answered to that loved name ?” said the Beguine.

“ Ada !” again said the Templar, unclosing

his visor and taking off his helmet. "Look upon me. Do you know me?"

"Know thee!" she cried, as she lifted her eyes to his countenance, and slowly perused his features. Long and fixedly did she regard him. Once she drew her hand across her eyes, as if to dissipate a mist or cloud that obscured her vision. Then speaking slowly and low, as if trying to collect remembrances that flitted across her memory: "Before my mind was darkened by guilt, or the kindliness of my nature had become obscured by that fierce and guilty passion which alike trampled upon every duty and every tender feeling, such a figure used to smile upon me, and it afterwards appeared to me in my dreams, with an expression of fierce resentment; later it took a gentler aspect, and a look of grief and pity quenched the terror of that burning frown,—who then art thou?"

"Ada! I knew the noble Baldwin.—The sad tale I heard told of the sufferings of thy mother awakened in my bosom an interest in thy fate.—How I loved thee," here his voice faltered,—
"ask the Lady Marguerite, for to her were all my hopes confided. I will not dwell upon my

sufferings, when deserting your convent you proved too surely 'twas an earthly, not a heavenly love which rendered you insensible to my vows. I have never known another love !” Then, in a voice sinking almost to a whisper, he said to her, as he drew nearer, “ Where is Bouchard ?”

She half shrieked, “ I am ignorant ! When the Unknown gave me to see the light of day, and to wander in blessed freedom beneath the azure canopy of heaven, I vowed never to let those eyes look upon him again. Never to speak to him, and if possible never to bear him in my thoughts. And I then also vowed never to raise my guilty voice without blending in my orisons the name of her I had so greatly injured. God is my witness how I have kept the vow.”

“ And where,” continued the Templar, “ is your son ?” The Beguine was silent for a minute, then she replied ambiguously, “ I wrote to St. Louis, and intrusted my child to Labrosse to present to the king. They tell me the king’s chamberlain is that boy.”

“ And does your heart acknowledge him ?” said the Templar.

She replied by throwing herself on her knees

and repeating from the Psalms, "Save me, and deliver me from the hand of strangers, whose mouth talketh of vanity, and whose right hand is a right hand of iniquity."

When she had finished her prayer, the Templar continued. "Many years I was away in the Holy Land. When I returned, my first inquiry was, Where is Ada? Alas! she had fled the saintly vocation for which I had designed her. She had sought the protection of her guardian, a servant of the church. She had fallen into the hand of a much injured woman. A child was born to her. The child of this unholy connexion, which was about to be delivered to the revengeful enemy, I took from Labrosse."

"You, *you!*" cried Ada, raising her head from her hands, which had hitherto concealed her features.

Without heeding her interruption, he proceeded: "I sought the hermits of St. Augustin, and there found Bouchard d'Avesnes so long believed to be dead. I told him of your situation. I extorted an oath from him never to make himself known to you. His acquaintance with

the localities of the place enabled him with the aid of his son to free you."

"And my son?" demanded Ada.

"I took the boy from the contemptible agent of her who sought his destruction, and conveyed him to the court of Brabant."

"O Heaven!" cried the young stranger deeply moved, and leaning forward as if to catch every syllable that fell from the Templar's tongue: The Templar unheeding the interruption continued, "I delivered the boy to Brabant's duke, strictly charging him to rear the infant in the service of that God whose laws his parents had so dreadfully outraged. I acknowledged his royal descent, but spoke not of you, nor of the deacon, but I called the boy Adenez (born of Ada)." The cloak in which the stranger was wrapped fell from his face. In a moment he was at the feet of the Beguine.

"Mother! Oh! my mother! bless thy son, thy Adenez!"

"Son! *My* son!" shrieked Ada, embracing him with tenderness. "And art thou indeed my son?—Oh! in my dreams," she continued,

"often hast thou stood before me, wearing just this noble form. But though I wept and wearied Heaven with my prayers, though I wandered over Hainault, through Flanders, though I sought thee in Holland, and traversed every corner of Brabant, I could not find thee. For," she continued, lowering her voice, "the Curse of the Black Lady darkened my spirit." For some moments she looked upon her son in silence, giving way to the delight of those emotions of paternal tenderness which have all the force of passion without their guilt. But suddenly her eye assumed the supernatural brightness which shone there when the spirit of prophecy was upon her, and her finger was raised to Heaven. Her other hand was fondly placed on the head of the minstrel, whilst she said, "Must it be even as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold, he eateth; but he awakeneth, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and he is yet faint, and behold his soul hath appetite." Then starting up to her full height while her frame trembled with the excess of agitation, she

screamed, "My son! conceal thyself, thy enemies are here!"—She, with almost supernatural force; dragged him into the cave, and implored him as he valued her blessing to rest there.

The sound of horses' feet were heard in the distance. It was an armed party which approached surrounding a litter, closely covered. At their head was a lady attended by a knight in black armour, who rode proudly by her side. Behind was a troubadour strictly guarded, his face was muffled in his cloak, and he seemed lost in the melancholy nature of his reflections. The Templar, as soon as he had viewed the party, rode to seek his suite, which the approach of a tempest, that had long growled at a distance and now burst over their heads, had dispersed in search of shelter.

When he again returned, the Beguine was at the door of the cave, as if to guard its entrance; "the Black Lady" was close to her. While a smile of horrid delight animated her dark and sunken features, the minstrel was cowering beneath the sword of Guy de Dampierre, and an aged pilgrim was sitting upright in the litter.

"Thus falls the curse of Marguerite upon her enemies," said the lady, "thus, though late, does she signalize her revenge."

"Stop, Sir Knight!" said the hermit, with the low and laboured accents of extreme age; "stop!" slowly muttered the ancient pilgrim, "that is not my son." Whether this exhortation was unheard or unregarded, it matters not—but the sword was still upraised, when the Templar rushing forward, exclaimed, "Cease, Sir Knight, it is *your* son!"—He was too late. The boy staggered beneath a wound aimed from his own father's weapon. The mantle, which was muffled round his face, fell from his arm, and discovered William de Béthune. "My father!" said he, in faltering accents.

"My son!" shrieked the Count of Flanders in the high piercing tones of despair. These words called together two, who had not met for years. The Beguine and the "Black Lady", losing all remembrance of past events, in the horrid sight now before them, stood over the dying page, while the warriors on either side, formed a circle round them.

"Oh!" cried the Beguine, throwing herself

upon her knees at the head of the page, "and is this the end of all my prayers, penances, and watchings? I have foreseen this horrible sight," she continued turning to the Templar, "and I have struggled and prayed that it might pass away, but it would not be. The curse was registered in heaven. My eyes *have* become dim. My heart *is* become hardened. How I have laboured, wearying Heaven with my prayers to turn from me the hatred of her I dare not look upon. You well know, the death of this boy must avert every hope of pardon. O yes! the weight of the curse is upon me. Have I, till now, ceased to tremble at every motion? Has not the rustling fall of a leaf been sufficient to make me flee? And now my enemy, she is here, and I wot not of it. And oh, I am going to have my portion with Judas, the betrayer of the Lord, in the land of everlasting darkness and death, if she pardon me not." Then turning towards Marguerite, "O pardon, pardon!" she cried, "Oh forgive, as thou wouldst be forgiven!

"Oh God! Pardon! Oh Holy Mary! intercede for me!" said the Beguine, casting her eyes to heaven. "The Black Lady" likewise

Threw her looks upwards, but they were not that of a contrite heart. All the malignity of hell seemed centered there, as she uttered curses long, and loud, and too fearful to repeat.

The Templar watched the countenance of Ada, he saw her hour was come. He hastened into the cave to free Adenez from his confinement. When he returned with Adenez, the page had already breathed his last. "Tell the queen I have been faithful unto death. I feared lest the malediction of my father should force me to betray—and therefore—I die!——"

Just as Adenez reached his mother, a flash of lightning struck quite across the awe-struck group. Quick and vivid as it was, it displayed to all, as it appeared to play across the features of the dying nun, the glorious sign of our redemption. She saw it too. A look of wonder, gratitude, and joy, lighted once more her dying features, the Templar and Adenez both sank on their knees in mute adoration, with their heads bowed to the ground. The same flash, even while she was exulting in the dying agonies of the penitent Ada, closed the eyes of the Countess Marguerite in everlasting night. She was struck with blindness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE Templar is on his way to Paris. Arrived there, all the peers of the crown are cited in council, to hear the report of his commission.

He brings with him papers from that aged pilgrim, who had been borne to the wood in the Countess Marguerite's litter—they were letters from Bouchard d'Avesnes. The name of that pilgrim was for the king's ear alone, it was sufficient that he knew the secret passages of that chateau. From a conversation he there overheard between the Lady Marguerite and her son, he was enabled to unravel the mysteries of Labrosse's dark conspiracy against the fame, and even the life, of the queen.

The king shuddered, turned pale, crossed himself, and cast his eyes to heaven, in silent gratitude that he had escaped the snare.

The Templar proceeded to relate the Beguine's exhortation. It was so full, clear, and explicit, that the king wept with joy. The queen's innocence was declared by acclamation. In

Presence of the council, the king summoned Madame Labrosse and Jane d'Assche before him. He insisted that they should take his two surviving boys to the presence of the queen, that Madame Labrosse and Jane on their knees should entreat her forgiveness of their conduct, and that they should make the children in the same attitude entreat her pardon for his unjust suspicions, and solicit her again to take them under her care.

They proceeded to the queen's apartment, in company with the Duke of Brabant her brother. The ladies performed their part of the ceremony, but the children would not be restrained to enact the scene prepared for them. "Dear mamma! Good mamma!" cried one—the other screamed with delight, but said nothing, as they flew towards her, at the moment in which the ladies were making their excuses. Mary lived many and happy years, but she declared this moment to be the sweetest of her life. "Oh! why?" said the eldest, "did not you come to nurse poor Louis? They told him you were very wicked, that it was you who had made him ill, but he would not believe it—he said, that he loved you,

that if you would come to him, he would be well!"—The queen could only embrace them again, and bedew them with her tears. But there was one witness to her emotion, who felt that every one of her tears carried a dagger to his heart. The king had time to view the alteration that sorrow had made in her beautiful countenance, though its expression again spoke of joyful emotion. She made an effort to rise as she perceived him—her feelings overpowered her—he fell at her feet. The monarch himself conducted her from her prison. In the evening she was habited once more in splendid regal robes, and attended to the Hall of Ceremony. There, seated on a throne by the side of the king, her brother close to her, and the Templar just behind, the company in groups discussed the momentous circumstance of her imprisonment. She, surrounded by Joinville, Marigni, and her children, listened to the narrative of the Templar. Then only was she informed of the fate of her faithful page, who fearing to encounter his father, or his father's satellites, assumed Adenes's garb, for in those days the character of a troubadour was sacred. Instead of accompanying

the duke back to Paris, he believed he would better fulfil his royal mistress's wishes in seeking the Beguine. A part of his route lay on the borders of Hainault, and there his father's squire met him and made him prisoner. Carried to the castle, in mistake for the minstrel, he was kept in close and solitary confinement; nor was he taken from his dungeon till he was brought out to be sacrificed an innocent victim to the vengeance of the countess.

The pilgrim of St. Augustine appears to have been secured on the journey. He was placed in the litter of the Lady Marguerite. Whether he was known, or for what fate he was reserved, was never ascertained. He died immediately after having made his deposition.

Thus ends my legend; but history details the following particulars. The queen enjoyed the entire confidence of the king during his life. He left her a widow, when his son Philip le Bel who succeeded him, was only seventeen. She survived many years, cherished by the king

and his brother, as their own mother, and admired by every body.

The king and the duke probably considered the Count of Flanders sufficiently punished by the loss of his son, but in the following reign, we find him pursued and imprisoned by Philip le Bel for many years; and he had but just been released from captivity when he died at the age of eighty.

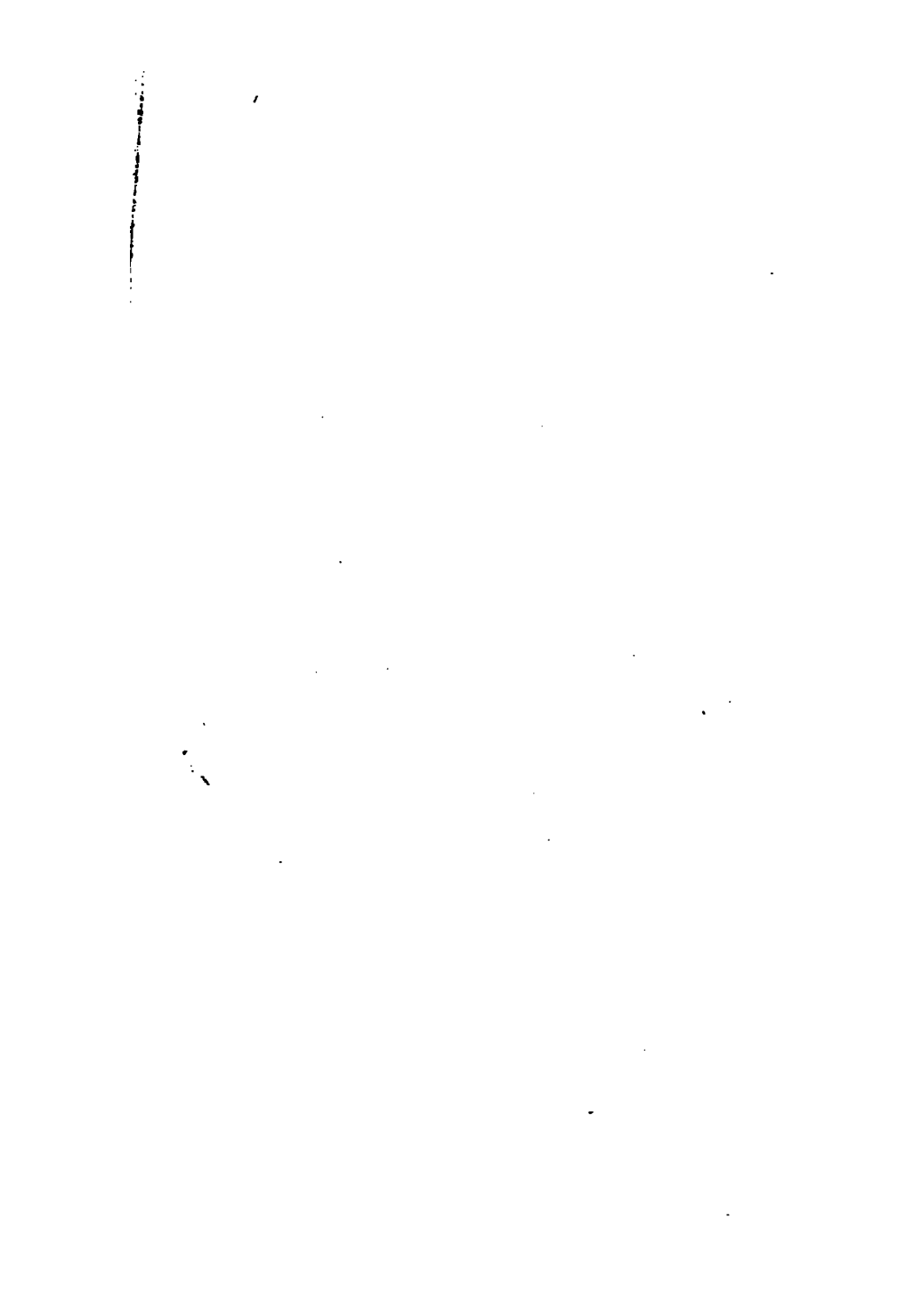
The villain Labrosse met the reward of his infamy, and perished on a gibbet.

A little chapel was built over the spot where the Beguine died, dedicated to the "Holy Cross" by Adenez, who entered a religious community. The "Black Lady" survived the loss of her sight about a year. The Legend describes her as impenitent to the last. She lamented not the loss of her grand-child, but that the sword of her son had not struck Adenez! And the last distinguishable words which fell from her lips were those of the dreadful malediction, which is still repeated in the traditions of Hainault as "The Curse of the Black Lady."

THE
THREE FORETELLINGS.

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LEGEND OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.



THE
THREE FORETELLINGS.

A

LEGEND OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

IN the whole of the wide districts through which the Rhine winds its way, from the romantic falls of Schaffhausen to the marshy plains of Holland, there was not a finer castle or a lovelier spot than Great Felsberg and its domains; nor does the ample range of feudal traditions afford an instance more striking than the fate of Karl Von Kreukenthal, the lord of those possessions.

This chieftain flourished and died about the latter part of the fourteenth century; but he flourished, not like a fine flower of chivalry, throwing beauty and perfume on a desert age, nor did he die the inspiring death of heroism, on the green and blood-stained sward, the flourish

of trumpets and the clashing of blades for the wild music of his requiem. His life was ignoble and his death obscure. Nevertheless, the extraordinary circumstance which governed both the course and the termination of his career, entitles him to a niche in that gallery of portraits, which is furnished from the abounding legends of the Rhine.

Count Karl had the double misfortune of losing his father while he was yet young, and of coming into the full possession of his power at a time of temporary peace, when neither the emperor nor his feudatories had any quarrel in hand, which could give honourable employment to the young scions of chivalry. This was indeed unlucky for our feudal hero; for had the crimson path of war invited his steps, he had, at the worst, met a soldier's fate, and closed a career worthy of his race and name, instead of running a base course, whose end was in keeping with its commencement.

No sooner was the old Count laid in the family vault, and the decencies of filial regret performed, than Karl gave a loose to the most boundless dissipation, prodigality, and extrava-

gance. From morn till night, and often from night till morn, the woods of his domains and the halls of his castle resounded with the boisterous noise of idle sports, and the revolting outbursts of debauchery. Great Felsburg became the resort of all that was worthless among the youth of the district, and it was shunned by the virtuous, as though a moral plague spot had marked it with infection.

The sameness of this dishonouring career, rather than its disgrace, at last turned Count Karl's desires into another channel. Having in the course of a few years exhausted all the varieties of low enjoyment, nearly drained his well-filled cellars, and almost worn out the patience and the means of his vassals, he found it impossible to replenish his coffers without intolerable exactions; and disgusted with all around him, because dissatisfied with himself, he resolved to seek in travel some new excitement for his palled appetite, or at least an escape from self-reproach and the rising murmurs of those whom he oppressed.

He accordingly proposed to two of his constant companions, and who in the usual parlance

of dissipation he called his friends, to accompany him in his proposed ramble of some months,—in what direction he cared not. The others readily consented. Few preparations were required. A very scanty supply of dress sufficed, for they were all circumstanced alike, and had none of them a surplus of money; and the frolicsome spirit of adventure combining with their necessities, induced them to lay aside both the titles and appearance of nobility, and to pursue their travels in the guise of middle life, if such a gradation may be stated to have existed at a period when there was scarce a class, as now, between the noble and plebeian. The three adventurers had in fact a dubious and mysterious air of half-and-half gentility—such as it then was—and their efforts to act the part they had assumed, sat ill on them. It is easier at any time to ape and caricature the airs of quality than to put on the simplicity of low life. The haughty and self-sufficient consciousness of these feudal lords of the fourteenth century was at every moment oozing out, through the forced assumption of manners in which they attempted to disguise themselves.

Ludwig of Steinbach and Ulric Von Linz were the two companions of Count Karl. The three friends had few distinctive points of character by which they might be separately marked. They were in fact all three, in more or less degrees, wild, reckless, and dissolute ; rushing on from freak to freak and folly to folly, like so many untamed animals, without restraint beyond the necessity of their circumstances, or guide, except the wilfulness of their passions. The only plan of conduct, if plan it might be called, on which they set out was one of intemperate riot. To follow the course of chance, to mock and laugh at every thing like order, to stop at nothing in the way of adventure, to pay no respect to place or person, to despise all moral, and give a free run to all immoral, suggestions, was the sum of the tactics which were to direct their roving campaign. And so resolving, away they started one fine autumnal morning, when the sun was peering over the hills and lighting up the vineyards and woods with a thousand varied tints, every leaf of the brown and yellow foliage looking like so many plates of burnished gold.

But the charms of scenery had no attraction for the libertines, who rose from their night's debauch with no feelings that could be influenced by the natural beauties through which they wound their way to the river-side. As they reached the margin of the stream a boat came gliding down the current, laden with such stores as the rude commerce of the time sent from the German states to the Low Countries. Count Karl and his companions hailed it as it neared the place where they stood. They soon concluded a bargain for their passage to the end of the voyage, they being indifferent as to its extent or termination. The oars were soon again in motion. The sails filled with the breeze. The old towers of Felsburg quickly disappeared, as a new turn in the river swept the little vessel round the base of a huge granite rock; and in due course of time, without much opportunity being afforded for the indulgence of their coarse humour, the three adventurers were landed on one of the quays of the city of Rotterdam.

The legend does not record the various feats of libertine excess they there indulged in. The

next scene in which it introduces the friends is on board one of those small passage-boats called trackschuyts which plied then, as they do now, on the canal between the towns of Rotterdam and Delft. And in a country where a few centuries have so little changed the appearance of things, however they have altered the character of the people, we may imagine the primitive-looking company, their air, their manners, and costume, among which the three lively libertines were thus thrown. There were no doubt many excitements for ridicule, and the young men did not fail to give vent to their turn for such satire as was suited to their tastes.

Among the passengers there was one object peculiarly marked out for mockery. This was an old woman, so old, so ugly, and so ill-tempered that the temptation to torment her was irresistible. Count Karl and his companions soon pitched on her as their especial prey; and they quickly began to assail her in every possible method that could ruffle and agitate, insult and annoy her.

The old woman bore these attacks ill. She

retorted with a spiteful and venomous expression of countenance, that seemed to exceed even the reasonable amount of malice which her provocation might be expected to excite. The young men were well pleased at the success of their attacks. They persisted in and increased them; till at length their victim was roused to a pitch of almost frightful rage.

“Bad, base, and bold as ye are,” screamed she, in a voice hoarse with passion, “beware lest ye go too far! Ye urge me beyond bearing. Another step, and ye plunge over the precipice! Desist, nor force me to utter the ban against ye; let my lips close without denouncing your doom!”

There was something very serious and very appalling in the words and in the looks of the old woman. The people who formed the remainder of the company, and the man who guided the boat, shewed symptoms of terror. They seemed to know more of the old woman than they had before chosen to tell. But they now, one and all, implored Count Karl and his comrades to desist, nor urge her to further speech. A

boisterous laugh, a simultaneous renewal of gibes and jeers, and a chorus of defiance, was the only answer vouchsafed by the reckless youths.

"Then be the consequences on your own heads!" vociferated the hag, her livid countenance distorted with rage, and her voice trembling as she spoke. "Ye have drawn down the curse in the height of your pride, like some lofty spire that attracts the storm-cloud which hovers over it. Ye shall all, then,—and ye may believe it when I tell it ye,—*all* die violent deaths, though different in degree and distant in time. Is that enough? or will ye know your separate doom?"

"Ay, ay! each of us must hear our individual fate, old sibyl, crooked crone, distorted mockery of woman!" said the young men with one voice, but each applying a separate epithet of abuse, while the bystanders once more appealed to them to let the prophecy pass as a general denunciation, without provoking the specific mention of the various ways in which their several lives were to terminate.

But this interference was too late. The old

woman would not suppress her wrath, and she resumed her foretelling.

“ Well then, you,” said she, (fixing her look on Ulric Von Linz,) “ you will be drowned ! You,” (pointing her shrivelled finger at Ludwig of Steinbach,) “ you will be hanged ! And you,” (nodding her head at Count Karl,) “ you will die by the hand of a woman ! And now with my withering curse upon ye each and all, go on your vile career till the hand of death, in those several ways, cuts ye short, and the foul fiend receives ye for his own ! ”

With these words her head sunk on her breast, and with closed eyes and compressed lips, as though muttering inwardly some unholy oraison, she sunk into deep thought. The passengers all seemed overwhelmed with horror at the awful foretelling. Murmured ejaculations, frightened looks at the prophetess and her doomed victims escaped them ; and, despite their natural courage, their blustering air, and their assumed indifference, a superstitious dread worked in the hearts of the three adventurers, and tamed them into involuntary silence. The passage

was soon ended, and every one seemed glad to quit the boat and escape from the uneasy recollection of the scene.

Years rolled on and the three young men were still living; all of them comparatively reclaimed from their vicious career, and all more or less established in the world. Count Karl had returned to his castle of Great Felsberg, and after due course of wooing, had been married to Anna of Lichtenau, one of the loveliest and gentlest maidens of Germany. Often and often used her enamoured husband say to himself, as he gazed on her sweet face, or held her soft hand in his, "Well, well! if the prophecy of the hag is to be fulfilled in my case, it is not at any rate this beauteous hand that is to grasp the dagger, or give me the death stroke—these white and taper fingers are not made to dabble in a murdered husband's blood!"

Yet even when his thoughts—in his own despite, for he did not like any allusion, even in thought, to the foretelling—took this turn, he used to feel a chill creep on his heart, and more than once he dropped suddenly, or even flung aside, the beautiful member which he had been

just toying with and caressing, so rudely that the tears filled the eyes of the gentle Anna, and her blushes, lest she had offended her beloved lord, spoke reproaches to his violence that cut him to the heart.

He was several times tempted to tell her the secret cause of his emotion; but he was restrained by shame at the necessity of revealing the disreputable frolic of his earlier days, and still more by a shuddering dislike to recur at all to the prophecy which seemed to haunt him like the troubled fancies of a dream.

With the exception of those occasional moments of weakness, Count Karl's days glided on smoothly and happily, with none of the noisy energy of feudal glory, but with enough of enjoyment and importance to satisfy a man who had spent his youth in scenes that wear out rather than nourish the natural vigour of the mind.

Ludwig of Steinbach had, by the sudden death of an elder brother, inherited his title and estates in the close neighbourhood of Great Felsburg. He was there settled in all the power of feudality, and following the example of his friend, the Count of Kreukenthall, he was seeking a

suitable match among the maidens of the Rhine valleys, at that period so celebrated for their beauty and the accomplishments that threw a grace over the coarse energy of the age.

Ulric Von Linz had not yet entered into possession of the paternal inheritance, which he reckoned on as one day to be his in the common course of nature. His father still lived. But he had anticipated the usual march of events, and trusting for independence to fortune and his sword, he had clandestinely married a lovely and enthusiastic girl, and entered into the service of the noted Baron Gortz Von Langenfeld, whom he followed to the field in the capacity of squire, and in whose predatory excursions against the wealthy merchants of Frankfort, and the burghers of the other commercial towns of Germany, he soon reaped a rich harvest of booty.

Whenever the three friends met, and that was often, they naturally recurred to the passages of former days, and not unfrequently did they revert to the adventures which signalized their tour in Holland, and particularly to that which had left so deep and serious an impression on each of their minds. They had often strove

amongst each other, as well as when separate, to make light of the foretellings of the old woman, and to consider them as the ravings of ill-temper, or of assumed supernatural knowledge. But it was in vain that they thus argued and wished to believe. The effect was made, and the superstitious dread of the prophecy's fulfilment, though by no means amounting to belief, continually rose before them in the aspect of an unavoidable—but they hoped a remote—reality.

It will be remembered that the promised doom of drowning, denounced by the old woman against Von Linz, was the first of the sequence which has given the title to our Legend. By a curious coincidence—if nothing more mysterious will be allowed by the sceptical reader—the first action of the drama fell in the order so specified.

Ulric Von Linz returned one night in great speed towards the castle of Langenfeld, in which he and his wife, Eleonora, had been granted a commodious lodging by the kindness of his noble master, Baron Gortz. “Blessed be the good Bishop of Bamberg!” thought Ulric. “Blessed also be the worthy provost of St. Babo, by whose intercession the bishop gave me a dis-

position for travelling to-day, All Saints' day, a festival which all sinners should keep sacred. Had it not been for this favour I should have been forced to wait till to-morrow to see my beloved Eleanor; and by my patron, St. Gobert! a night of even midsummer passed away from her appears to me the length of Christmas eve, when waiting for the midnight mass! How surprised and happy she will be to see me to-night instead of to-morrow! In half an hour I shall once more clasp her in my arms!"

These thoughts were accompanied by two involuntary strokes of the rider's heels into the flanks of his almost jaded steed, which, so provoked, rose again from its tired amble into a rapid trot. But besidea that uxorious longing which urged Ulric forwards, there were other reasons which lent fresh force to his desire to reach the castle. The wind blew fiercely. The rain fell in torrents. And it was just the hour when the ghosts of the murdered were wont to strike with fleshless hands at the doors of their relatives and friends, to recommend their suffering souls to pious intercessions. For every one knows that all who may have died a violent

death on All Saints' day never rest in their graves, without having punished those who caused their death.

While his various reflections made the bold heart of Ulric palpitate with strange emotion, and he mechanically grasped the lance which rose perpendicularly from his stirrup's rest, he observed, at no great distance, glimmering through the wood, a light, which suddenly fixed the course of his wandering thoughts.

"Heaven be praised!" cried he, breathing more freely, "'tis the castle of Langenfeld. This light shines in the western tower, where my sweet Eleanor and I alone reside. This is a true love signal, lighted up even a day before my expected coming. Like a good Christian and a faithful wife, my Eleanor puts up her prayers for her poor Ulric—I come, I come, my beloved!"

As this brief soliloquy was finished, his horse's hoofs struck on the pavement which announced the close neighbourhood of the *Pont-levis*. He soon found the horn hanging on its accustomed hook, and he blew a loud blast thereon. The draw-bridge was lowered, and a mail-clad sentry

peered out into the gloomy air from a stone sentry-box.

"Ah, master squire! come freely in!" cried he.

At some paces within the porch stood another man, dressed in a gown of black camlet, with a silver chain suspended round his neck. It was Wisembert Von Skreyer, seneschal of the castle, and uncle by his mother's side to Ulric Von Linz.

"Saviour of man!" exclaimed the seneschal, piously making the sign of the cross on his breast. "Is it you, nephew? Holy Virgin! Have you dared, in defiance of the rules of the church, to travel on a day like this? If some great misfortune does not happen to you for so serious a sin, assuredly you are more lucky than wise!"

"Comfort yourself, my worthy uncle, I am on safe ground. I carry dispensation from his reverence the Bishop of Bamberg; and thanks to the sacred parchment, I have not met with ghost or goblin on my way. And well it was, for though I am not a man to shrink from sword or lance, yet at every step I dreaded to see the

withered skeletons of some of those bold men-at-arms killed by my hand, this day twelve months at the pass of Furth—Heigh ! halloo, there, varlet !” cried he to a groom who passed near in the direction of the stables ; “ here, take my horse to his stall, and tend him well. He is used to good fare of late, for he comes from Bamberg palace, where he had litter to his belly, and where the seneschal never stints man nor beast, like some whom I know, who make a fuss about a bundle of straw, a measure of oats, or a flask of Rhein wine.”

“ While he spoke, Ulric alighted from his horse, threw the bridle to the groom, shook the rain from his cloak and morion, stuffed his battle-axe and dagger into their respective sheaths by the saddle sides, stretched his arms and legs, which all felt cramped after his long ride and soaking seat ; then, grasping his sword in one hand and his lance in the other, he plunged into a low dark corridor, and soon reached the wide and solitary hall of the castle. The walls of this apartment were covered with armour and implements of war, some of which hung in dark and gloomy patches, while others

reflected, in their polished plates and blades, the rays of a lamp suspended from the ceiling.

Ulric placed his sword and lance in their accustomed places. He next pulled off his huge boots, which at the outside looked as if solely formed of flexible iron straps, but they were lined with a thick coat of leather. He then stripped off his shirt of mail, which was one of those brigandines covered with little steel rings, the ends of the sleeves formed to receive the hands in a species of fingerless gloves, which were split in the palm to admit the wearer's weapons and bridle being grasped readily. At the height of the shoulder the iron covered tunic was joined to a hood of the same sort of tissue, and which could be drawn over the head in the hour of battle. Three openings in front admitted of free sight and breathing; and this kind of sack, rounded by a buff leather lining, sometimes served the place of a casque.

Freed from his cumbrous accoutrements, Ulric remained in the doe-skin pourpoint and *haut-de-Chauseés*, which, fitting him closely, shewed his slight and sinewy figure from head

to foot. He immediately began to ascend the spiral stairs of the round tower, inhabited by himself and his wife. As he stole up, his unbooted feet making no sound on the stone steps, he chuckled with joy, anticipating the sweet surprise he was about to cause his longing wife. He reached the door, opened it so gently that it made not the slightest noise, and beheld—O fury, torments, and demons!—his beloved Eleanor clasped in the arms of his perfidious chieftain, Baron Gortz. He fiercely, but without a word, threw his hand against his side, but no dagger was there to meet its grasp. He fixed his eyes on the guilty pair. They saw him not—theirs were blinded in criminal delight. His revenge must be for a few moments deferred. In a frightful access of despair he turned away, and meant to enter the armoury in search of his arms. His confusion turned his head—no wonder that his steps turned wrong. He missed the entrance to the right passage; stepped into a wrong opening, which in the deep gloom he did not perceive to be the platform of the tower; made another false and forward step—instantly

the deep water of the castle ditch sent upwards the echo of a heavy splash—Ulric had tumbled in.

Within a quarter of an hour the chapel bell was heard sounding the call to vespers. Soldiers, varlets, the household maidens, and the ladies of honour of the baroness, all entered the chapel and began their devotions. Dame Eleanor, her cheeks slightly tinted with an unusual blush, took her place close to the cushion-covered stool where knelt her pious, virtuous, and ill-treated mistress, Gertrude of Erbach, the neglected wife of Baron Gortz.

After the almoner had recited the evening prayers, and the congregation had performed the due responses, and the psalms were chanted, and the blessing pronounced, soldiers, varlets, household maidens, and all retired; some to their military duties, the others to their beds. Old Wisambert, the seneschal, going out of the chapel one of the latest, gravely addressed his nephew's wife, who was exchanging in a whisper some furtive observations with Baron Gortz. " Dame Eleanor," said he, " you

should admonish your husband not to absent himself thus from the household prayers, particularly on such a holy day as this."

"Master Wisambert," replied she, gaily, "I little doubt that Ulric has performed his duties to-day—it is not in the palace of a bishop that devotion is neglected."

"I do not understand your jest," said the seneschal; "you may have reasons for keeping your husband's return a secret, but not from me, for I was the first who saw him cross the draw-bridge scarce an hour gone."

Eleanor turned pale, and Baron Gortz shewed some slight embarrassment; Wisambert, convinced by the anxious tone and look of his niece, as she uttered some exclamations of surprise, felt a thrill of anxiety. "What then has become of him?" exclaimed he. "He could not have quitted the castle again unobserved. The bridge is up—the portcullis down—Heaven grant that no evil is hidden in this mystery! Ah, this was no day to undertake a journey!" And while the weeping Eleanor followed her mistress to perform her duties as one of the ladies of

honour, the seneschal, attended by several varlets, hurried from place to place throughout the castle, loudly calling forth his nephew's name.

The dawn began to break, but no traces of him were discovered.

The disappearance of the squire was soon the common topic of discourse within the wide precincts of the castle. It spread from the halls to the courts, and thence quickly reached the guard-room close to the outermost porch.

"Paul," said the centinel to the man whose turn it was to relieve him, and who yawned and stretched after his six hours of sleep, "Paul, this is a curious affair about the Squire Ulric."

"The Squire Ulric?" echoed the other, drowsily.

"Ay,—you know he passed into the castle yesterday evening, near vesper time, and since then nobody has seen or heard of him."

"Thunder of Heaven! that explains the noise I heard in the fosse, while I walked my hours near the western tower. The Squire Ulric is drowned, comrade."

"Drowned!"

"Ay, as sure as there are twenty feet of

water in the fosse. The night was as cold and as dark as—as hell,” (continued the soldier, puzzled for a simile,) “when, wrapped in my cloak and half dozing on my post, I heard a sudden scream from a man’s voice, and then a splash into the water. I saw nothing;—I cried Who goes there?—got no answer. After that it was no business of mine you know, comrade; but there is little doubt it was the squire, who threw himself from the tower and was drowned.”

“But what could have driven him to such a deed?”

The soldier resumed in a low whisper,—
“Why, as for that, there may be another version of the adventure. You know the Baron loves Madame Eleanor,—every one knew it but Ulric; and who can tell but to get rid of him—dark night—a high tower—a deep ditch! Tell me, comrade, did you never hear that our Baron poisoned his father to inherit the sooner——?”

“Hist! silence, Paul! Such a whisper as that might lead a man to the gallows. God have mercy on us! These are awful times, and we live in a wicked world! If this be true, it is a bad turn for the Baron. Yesterday was All-

Saints' day, and no man murdered on that day can rest in his grave till he be avenged."

The two soldiers trembled with superstitious dread ; and in a moment more an impatient, but as they thought an unearthly cry for admission was heard from outside the fortress—it was the voice of Ulric !

The soldiers lowered the draw-bridge, with a mixture of hope and fear ; but at the sight of him who claimed entrance the latter feeling alone had place in their minds, a thousand-fold greater than before.

It was indeed the face and form of the Squire Ulric on which they gazed ; but as they gazed and trembled, they instinctively made the sign of the cross. Ulric looked more like a corpse than a living man. His cheeks were pale and lank ; his eyes sunken and fixed. He said nothing, but his lips moved as though he muttered some words to himself ; and when he seized Paul by the hand and gave it a convulsive squeeze, *his* felt cold, clammy, and stiff.

" Tell me, comrade," murmured Paul, as the figure passed on, " hast thou ever seen a ghost ?"

" Never—*before !*" replied the other ; and

both slunk into the guard house, shivering with terror.

The figure continued to stalk forwards, silently, and making no pause, nor giving sign of recognition to aught that met or crossed its path, till Baron Gortz himself came suddenly upon it, as it prepared to enter the portal which led to the banquetting room. Then its pale face grew still more livid; and a shudder of suppressed rage seemed to pass over its whole frame. The baron shook in every joint, like all the previous beholders; but recovering himself, he assumed a haughty air of displeasure, and said aloud,—“Ulric! whence and how come you here in this strange plight, unarmed, and drenched with rain? You arrived last night—your uncle told me so. Why have you not communicated to me the result of your mission to the Bishop of Bamberg? Why and how did you quit the castle again and unperceived?”

“I saw soon after I entered it that I had lost something most valuable—the receipt given by his reverence for the ransom, which I duly paid. I scaled the postern to seek it,—here it is: *that* mission is completed.”

Such were the words spoken, but the slow, deep tones resembled little the Squire Ulric's living voice; and the action which suited to the words, was more like the mechanical movement of an automaton than the outstretching of a human arm.

"And how seems this besotted bishop disposed in the affair?"

"He refuses," replied the figure, "to release you from the ban. But what need you care for his excommunication? Were I in your place, noble baron, I would seek revenge instead of settlement. I would have back my ten thousand silver marks. His palace is badly guarded. He goes this day to meet the emperor. He takes half the garrison for escort. Two hundred well-armed men, led on by your impetuous valour, would take the rich stronghold in an hour."

"What say you, Ulric? Repeat me this," exclaimed Baron Gortz; and taking the figure by the arm, they walked whispering off together towards a private place, the shuddering observers murmuring to each other, "The brave baron is lost: he is in the power of the fiend!"

In another half hour the whole castle of Lan-

genfeld was in the greatest possible bustle. Four hundred warriors were making their rapid preparations for departure ; and the baron was seen urging on the different groups in every direction.

Standing on the lower step of the round tower stairs, the figure that so resembled, yet so mocked the likeness of Ulric von Linz, looked on the busy scene with a faint and fiendlike smile, that made the beholders sick at heart. While so absorbed, a soothing voice whispered in the ear of the statue-like figure,—“ Ulric, my best loved Ulric ! can it be that, after the torture of suspense you have caused me for the livelong night, you now go away again without one word, one look exchanged with your Eleanor ? Cruel husband, you love me no longer ! ”

The figure turned slowly round and threw on her so terrific a scowl that the shocked woman almost sunk in horror on the ground. Consciousness of her fault and momentary repentance kept her from fainting outright. Overcoming her repugnance and her fright, she murmured, “ Oh Ulric, how ghastly, how deathlike you look ! Come, come with me above, up to our tower, and let all this sad mystery turn to joy ! ”

A hideous smile relaxed the rigid features on which she gazed.

"Come!" said the figure.

"Why, how now? What is this?" exclaimed Baron Gortz, in affected bantering, and riding over towards the tower stairs. "Ulric alone unarmed, and all the rest on horseback and in movement! A plague on all newly married men! They think more of dalliance and love than of donning a coat of mail. This way, Ulric, come!"

"A moment, chieftain. I shall catch you at the end of the avenue," said the figure. The baron rode away, with an envious look. In a few seconds Eleanor was on the upper platform of the tower, held fast in the deathlike grasp of her terrible companion.

"Here is our chamber, dearest," said she, trembling and afraid to look on him.

"Stop, *here!*" rejoined the figure. "Tell me now, while looking down below on that deep ditch into which Ulric the deceived fell yesternight, art thou not a faithful wife?"

Eleanor fixed her glazed looks on the demoniacal smile which curdled her blood. "Mercy,

mercy!" cried she. "Have pity on my soul!"

"May thy soul, then, be saved—but may HIS be damned for ever!"

With these words, accompanied by a piercing scream from the agonized woman, the frightful scene was finished. A struggle on the platform's verge—a fluttering motion as she was cast below—a heavy splash—and all was over.

That very evening, at sunset, as the provost of the episcopal palace of Bamberg was busily occupied in paying the amount of their daily hire to the numerous workmen who were at that period employed in the repairs of the cathedral church hard by, he observed, from the little lodge in which he was stationed at one end of the bridge which communicated with the main street of the town, the figure of a man armed at all points, his visor down, galloping full speed towards the palace. As soon as this person perceived that he attracted the attention of those beyond the bridge, he threw a piece of crumpled parchment on the road, and turning round suddenly was out of sight before any of the observers could even form a plan for stopping him.

The parchment was soon picked up by the provost's order, and found to contain the following words :

“ Baron Gorts comes to-night, with 400 warriors, to annul the Bishop of Bamberg's excommunication, to receive back his 10,000 silver marks, pillage the palace, and burn it to the ground.”

“ Up with the draw-bridge ! Down with the portcullis ! Workmen all stand fast ! Let no man stir but to mount the ramparts and round towers ! Carry up stones in hundreds to hurl down on the foe ! Holloa ! captain of the archers, muster your platoons, look well to your bows and quivers ! Men at arms, belt on your jackets of proof, accoutre your horses, and stand firm and ready ! Canons of our holy cathedral, while we fight for the blessed house of God, pray in the church, and send up hymns to heaven !”

Such were among the manifold orders given throughout the precincts of the episcopal palace of Bamberg, as soon as the mysterious warning was promulgated within. Prompt obedience was given to each command. Every one shuddered at the threatened approach of the terrible Baron

Gortz: all felt it to be a case of life and death.

And wild and various were the reports that spread abroad, as to the identity of him who gave the important warning. Many swore solemnly that he melted into air as soon as he threw the scroll upon the ground. Others testified as to the ethereal flames that issued from his horse's feet and nostrils, and played like a halo round his head. Some talked of fiery wings on which he mounted towards heaven. The least credulous believed that it was the archangel Michael, sent specially by the Virgin to preserve from ruin the cathedral dedicated to her glory.

At daybreak the next morning, Baron Gortz and three hundred and seventy-six of his followers lay dead in the fosses and at foot of the ramparts of the bishop's palace. *Te Deum* was sung gratis for the victory, and *de profundis* for the souls of those whose friends chose to pay for it.

A scanty band of those who escaped the slaughter returned sorrowfully to Langenfeld. There were not many words spoken on the retreat. But two of the men who rode close to-

gether, both severely wounded, held the following short colloquy as they came in sight of the western round tower.

“ Well, Paul, what do you think of this bloody business ? ”

“ Why I think, comrade, that the ghost of Ulric Von Linz may now rest quietly in the grave.”

The news of this remarkable transaction was quickly bruited throughout Germany. In every circle, in the remotest villages and the most completely insulated castles, as well as in the populous towns, it was soon well known that the famous Gortz of Langenfeld was traitorously entrapped to his ruin by the ghost of his drowned squire ; and many a sermon of morality was preached to the lascivious nobles—these events serving as the text—by monks and friars, who descanted loudly on the sin (and privately whispered on the imprudence) of carrying on an adulterous intercourse—with unbolted doors.

But if the story soon became the common talk of the country, excited horror and superstition in the minds of mere general listeners, what were its effects on those of Ulric’s two surviving

friends, Ludwig of Steinbach and Count Karl Von Kreukenthal?

The ruin or the death of a dear companion is a sad event to the sympathetic bosom of human friendship, when it leads to, or carries a warning of one's own. There is therefore small doubt that Count Karl and Baron Ludwig suffered intensely when they learned the sad story of their old companion's fate. And great were the encomiums passed on their goodness of heart and keen sensibility, by those who observed their emotion when they first heard the story told, and the shuddering agitation with which they received every subsequent mention of it.

And its effect on the morals as well as the feelings of the two friends was not a little remarkable. Steinbach suddenly renounced a most sinful share in a conspiracy (for a purpose which he previously thought very patriotic) against the emperor,—the latter having promulgated a decree declaring that all rebels or plotters, no matter what their rank, should for the future die the felon's death of *hanging*, the moment of their discovery. Count Karl, at the same time gave up the pursuit of two or three low amours, which

in spite of his plighted troth he had warmly entered on ; and it was remarked, that such was his excess of chastity, that he never touched a *woman's hand*, save that of his wife ; and often did she observe the increased horror with which at times he shrunk from even the soft pressure of *hers*.

But the years continued to roll on ; and by degrees Count Karl and his friend reverted to the fate of poor Ulric, as one of those extraordinary coincidences which so frequently startle us in our passage through life. They took every possible pains to fortify each other's disbelief as to the supernatural power of the old Dutch-woman, and they endeavoured still to laugh to scorn her foretellings—at least those which regarded themselves. What chance indeed, what possibility almost, of their ever being fulfilled ?

Count Karl was now the father of children ; and so cautious was he grown, so unapproachable in fact by any thing wearing the semblance of the female form, (always excepting the gentle Anna,) that he had acquired universally the title of woman-hater, from the odium of which he was not freed, even in consideration of the close at-

tachment which seemed to bind him wholly to his wife.

Baron Ludwig was married and settled quietly in his castle, carefully eschewing conspiracies and all other things which might be likely to end in hanging; and so strict in avoiding all contact with a rope, that he saw a wing of that very castle burned down one night, sooner than lend a hand to the exhausted servants who worked at the well, or pull up another bucket-full of water, which every one declared would have stopped the conflagration.

Nevertheless—but we will regularly proceed to lead the reader to the second part of the drama, arising from the old Dutchwoman's foretellings.

The legend does not record whether the invitation was given by the count or the baron; but sure it is that one fine morning in September they went out together into the woods of Great Felsberg, attended by a goodly train of men and dogs, to hunt the wild boar, an animal which then abounded in the forests, in numbers enough to fill with envy of the good old times the modern sportsman, who is doomed to many a day of

fruitless toil, in vain endeavours to rouse up even one of those monsters from its lair.

The cause of the particular day on which this hunting party took place being so fixed, was the unusual circumstance of the Countess Anna having decided on it on which to pay a visit, which was intended to end with the morrow, to her noble aunt, Baroness Eldegonda Von Lichtenau, who had just arrived at a neighbouring castle for a sojourn of some weeks, to superintend the vintage, from which she derived a large revenue, but which, from circumstances foreign to our story, called imperiously for the mistress's eye at this juncture.

"And so, Anna, thou hast fixed on this morning positively for thy visit?"

"Yes, my husband, if it so pleases thee; but if not, I can postpone it, or put it off entirely—"

"No, no, Anna, thou must go—I will not thwart thee in thy duty to this relative of thine—I will not have it said that Karl, the woman-hater," (and at these words the count attempted to laugh,) "carried his jealousy as far as his repugnance, and kept even his wife from visiting her aunt."

"My dear husband, thy will is my law. I go, as thou biddest it—but I grieve to mark that thou art pained even when thou seemest to smile. Speak frankly, mine own Karl—what is it that thus moves thee?"

"Nought but a foolish weakness, my Anna—wilt thou bear with it? It is, in truth, but my reluctance to part with thee for a night—an unworthy misgiving seems to steal over me at being left alone—but go, go, my wife—thy duty and perhaps our interest, requires this mark of attention to thy aunt."

"Ah, Karl! how delightful is it to see, in this objection to my absenting myself even for a day, such sweet proof of thy unaltered love! Come, come! cheer up, my husband—thou shalt be rewarded for this—I will prove myself not less loving than thou art."

With these words Countess Anna placed her arm affectionately on her husband's shoulder, and taking one of his hands in hers, she continued—"Yes, Karl, this is true happiness—to find myself so dear to thee still—to know that for my sake thou hast given up (and it is not for me to blame the excess) even the acquaint-

anceship, not to say the friendship, of every other living woman ! And is it indeed for love of me thou hast done this ? Are all the early habits and frolics of thy youth—and they have told me, Karl, thou wert wayward and truant in those days—are *all* forgotten ?”

“ Forgotten !” echoed the count, with a shudder.

“ And dost thou indeed and for ever renounce all that used to be so dear to thee, Karl ? Pleasure, society, the world ? And all for the sake of her who has little to requite the sacrifice, but the truth of a fond heart and the pressure of a friendly hand !”

“ Anna, Anna, this is torture in its worst shape ! Press not my hand in thine—good wife release me—my blood tingles and runs chill ! Oh ! fate, fate, what wouldst thou of me ? Let the curse at once fall down and end these pangs !”

Count Karl, violently snatching away his hand as he gave utterance to this outburst of suffering, sank on a seat. His gentle countess placed herself beside him, terrified at his strange emotion. “ Why, Karl, my beloved, how or

what is this? This is the worst of those strange symptoms which from time to time I have observed in thee, when in the very moments of love's dalliance thou hast shrunk and started from my side, as though thou hadst felt a basilisk's touch, not mine. But never did look so fearful distort thy countenance—never words so wild break from thy trembling lips, since the day that brought the sad news of poor Ulric Von Linz being drowned.”——

“Drowned, hanged, stabbed in the dark, or choked by some fair yet treacherous fingers! Ay, those were the promised endings of our days of life! Stabbed! strangled! Ha, ha, ha! 'tis wondrous droll—is it not, my Anna? I feel the soft yet deadly grasp on my throat this moment, and my heart throbs as though it vibrated to the feeble, yet sufficient stroke! Ha, ha, ha! Bear with me, Anna—thou hast roused strange visions in my mind—but the fit is passing away—forgive—forget this phrensy—kiss me, dearest! No—not thy hand again! just kiss my parched lips, and my cold brow, sweet one! There, that is enough!”

“Karl, Karl, my beloved! I will not, cannot quit thy side to-day—thou must not pass this night alone!”

“Yes, Anna, yes! I must not add disgrace to agony. I am ashamed of this—I must not suffer self-contempt for this childish weakness to turn into dislike of her who witnessed it—of *thee*, my gentle wife.”

“Dear Karl, I will run the risk.”

“Thou shalt not, love, nor will I. Man’s mind is a strange mystery, Anna. Even when he knows himself unjust, and hates himself the while, he cannot stem the tide that turns that hate on others. Thou must now set out for Lichtenau, good wife. I hear thy palfry neighing in the court-yard. And see! the sun slopes over Felsberg crags—’tis late, my love—thy aunt expects thee. To horse, to horse, my Anna! I shall be with thee a part of the way—as far as the cross-roads of the four brothers, where I am to meet Von Steinbach and take to our forest sports.”

In a very short time the Count and Countess were mounted and away. They had neither of them much appetite for the repast prepared in

the refectory; and few words were spoken by either as they passed through the court-yard across the moat, and into the plantations and garden-ground that skirted the castle. As soon as they gained the road leading to the main route of Lichtenau, Countess Anna resolved to make an attempt to rouse her husband from the uneasy mood of thought into which he was sunk. "Dear Karl," said she, leaning towards him across her palfrey's neck, "I would that we might traverse alone the half-league of road to the cross-way where we are to part. Let my women and page, with the varlets, and all this noisy train of dogs and huntsmen, take the shorter and closer path through the forest skirt, while we quietly ride on together. Wilt thou, love?"

"Will I? Canst thou imagine a refusal to a proposal, Anna, that will give me a half-hour more of thy sweet company unbroken in upon?" And the Count instantly gave orders in conformity with the wish of his wife.

They were soon alone, walking their steeds at a slow pace towards the appointed spot for parting. The Countess scarcely knew how to accomplish her purpose of withdrawing her hus-

band's reflections from that inward gulf in which they seemed plunged. It struck her that probably the best way would be to make them revert to some subject foreign to any personal cause of trouble; and she playfully asked him if he would tell her a story?

"A story, Anna?" exclaimed he starting, and with a look of surprise; "why, what child's thought has taken possession of thy brain?"

"None, but the desire to see thee look less absorbed in manhood's cares, my husband. So do repeat me somewhat of thy early adventures—or tell me some tales of local tradition which abound so in this part of the county. I have heard many a one since I came to live at Great Felsberg, but every spot around has its romantic legend of old times and scenes gone by. Come, Karl, stir up thy memory, and tell me some brief tale to turn me from sadness."

"Well, since thou wilt—and by my troth I believe thou art wise, my wife—I'll tell thee the legend that lends its name to the cross-roads where we shall part anon"—

"The cross-roads of the four brothers? I never knew there was a legend about it."

“There is though, my love—and it is called ~~THE~~
THE BEWITCHED FIDDLESTICK. Will you ~~hear~~
hear it, Anna?”

“Ay, ay, Karl! The title sounds invitingly—
droll, and there is nought serious in it—just—
what I would list to in this morning’s mood.”

“Listen, then!” said the count, as reining
in still closer his steed so as to check even his
previous drowsy pace, he proceeded to recount
the legend. “Konrad Gerloch was the best
minstrel in the town of Kreukenthal. In no
village, for ten miles round, would the young
folks have danced in good heart, if any other
than Konrad played the bass-viol at the wedding
and christening parties. He was of course a
personage of consequence—and he knew it. He
sat at the upper table with the parents of the
newly married or newly born. The best bits
and a goblet of the oldest wine were reserved for
him. Whenever he spoke, all ears listened, for
none knew better the knack of telling a story,
sung a better song, or cracked a readier joke.

“It was one evening in winter that there was
a wedding at Freisbach. They danced late;
and it was pitch-dark, and the night far ad-

vanced, when old Konrad strapped his bass-viol on his back, and announced his intention of setting out for home. Every possible effort was made to prevent him. 'Stay, where you are, good Konrad,' said the whole party with one voice; 'the wind is to the north—it hails fast—the forest is not safe at an hour like this. Wolves and bandits abound—to say nothing of the witches who hold their sabbath in it.'

" 'Tut, tut!' said the obstinate and fool-hardy old man; 'I have a flask or two of good Rhine wine under my belt, a furred cloak for my shoulders, and this iron-ended stick in my hand. Thus I defy cold, wolves, and robbers! As for witches or goblins, if I meet any I'll make them dance to the sound of my viol—and they'll confess, I'll warrant it, that hell holds no minstrel like old Konrad Gerloch.'

" With these words, which made the young folk laugh and the old ones look grave, he gave a double roll to his fox-skin cloak, and set out to walk, with a firm and steady pace, the path through the forest from Freisbach to Kreukenthal.

side without his having perceived his approach. He handed a bugle-horn to the minstrel, who instantly put it to his mouth, and blew a blast that made the forest ring. A drawbridge was instantly let down, and Konrad, somewhat bewildered but too happy at the prospect of shelter and hospitality to ask any questions, followed the old man, and was soon in a magnificent saloon in the very heart of the castle.

“ All that he witnessed filled him with amaze. A crowd of people was before him ; some employed in the luxurious indulgences of the table, on a repast of a magnificence so wondrous that it at once made Konrad hungry, yet took away his appetite. Numerous parties were occupied in play, at games and with appurtenances which his homely experience had never heard of. But the greatest number were whirling in a maze of dances of the most wild and fantastic variety.

“ Old Konrad marched boldly up to a tall and portly man, whose manner of authority and politeness united, marked him for the host of all this fine company. ‘ My lord chieftain,’ said he, ‘ I am a poor minstrel, who have lost my way and found myself here, without knowing

how or why. Pray allow me to pass the night in some corner of your castle, and I promise you to take myself off at daybreak without saying a word of what has passed.'

"Konrad felt that he had gone too far in betraying his misgivings that all was not as it should be. But a benevolent smile from the tall gentleman reassured him. At his beckon a page came forward, unstrapped the bass viol from the minstrel's back, and hung it up on one of the gilded nails which glittered in different parts of the chamber among the rich hangings. While the page did this, he gave a grin of an expression so diabolical that old Konrad shuddered with fear—and still more when he saw that the place where the page had held his instrument, was blackened and burned as though his hand had been of fire!

"Old Konrad became confused and fearful. He walked about the room, but no one took notice of him. He vainly strove to discover an acquaintance—for he was known to all the nobles of the country—but whenever he fixed his looks on a face, a light vapour immediately spread over it, so as totally to conceal the features.

While he strove to convince himself that all these strange things were real he perceived all at once a bass viol of most beautiful form and elegantly ornamented standing close at the foot of the orchestra where the musicians were seated. Seized with a fit of envious vanity, and resolved to give a proof of his skill to the goodly company and the band of his brother minstrels, he laid hold of the instrument, and at the same time took up the bow which lay beside it. The moment his fingers touched the bow they thrilled with a nervous sense of pain—Konrad attempted to throw away the bow, but in vain—it stuck to his hand as though it formed a part of him. Shocked and astonished, he looked round for aid, or some solution of these many mysteries—and then to his utter horror he observed, grinning at him from the orchestra, the cadaverous countenance of old Martin Metzler, his first master of music, who had been dead and buried for upwards of thirty years.

“ ‘ Holy Virgin, take pity on me ! ’ exclaimed Konrad. And at the words, musicians, dancers, gamblers, feasters—all, together with the castle itself, vanished from before his eyes.

“The next morning, some of the wedding guests who, more prudent than the old minstrel, had put off till daylight their return to Kreukenthal, found the poor traveller lying senseless at the foot of a gibbet by the roadside, a very beautifully wrought fiddlestick in his hand.

“‘Helloa!’ cried one, ‘what have we here? By the mass! old Konrad has chosen a hard couch!’

“‘And a strange pin for his viol and bow,’ said another. ‘There they hang on the foot of the murderer’s skeleton!’

“‘And, devils and goblins!’ exclaimed a third, ‘was he afraid that the blanched bones would be cold in the night? Here is his cloak spread over the fleshless shoulders!’

“‘What a calculating old fellow he is!’ observed one of the party, who strove to rouse up the poor musician; ‘see, he brought two bows with him, that he might not be at a loss if he broke or lost one of them.’

“Brought fairly to himself by the persevering efforts of the good peasants, Konrad soon recovered his presence of mind and his usual cunning air of importance. He attributed to the

cold the cause of his state of insensibility ;—but he took good care not to say a word of the infernal vision which he had seen and acted in during the night.

“ But safely lodged in his cottage, he carefully examined the bow of which he had become so strangely possessed. A thrill of terror was the result. The bow was nothing more nor less than a dead man’s bone highly polished ; and on it he observed, curiously cut, the name of a neighbour, well known in the town as a practitioner in many different ways of magic. Konrad waited till night set in, and then he took his way to the house of this man of evil fame.

“ ‘ Good Father Hans,’ said he, with reverential tone and abject salutation, ‘ here is a fiddlestick which I believe to be yours, and which I found last night.’

“ The wizard grew pale at these words. After a pause of agitation, he murmured :—‘ Ah, Master Konrad, you saw strange sights last night ! A word from you could do me great mischief !’

“ ‘ God forbid that I should say it, neighbour !’

“‘ You are right, Konrad ; for were I burned alive, some ill might happen to you !’

“ Konrad rose to retire, for he was becoming very uneasy once more. The wizard, however, held him down again, and putting his head close, whispered into his ear—‘ Who are your enemies, Konrad ? I will this very night throw a curse on their cattle, or a withering spell on them !’

“ ‘ I have no enemies, neighbour, and I wish ill to no one.’

“ ‘ How, then, can I be useful to you ?’

“ ‘ Give him this purse ! It will puzzle him to spend all it contains, for squander what he may, nine golden crowns will always remain at the bottom.’

“ These words were spoken by a tall man, who was not most assuredly in the wizard’s little closet when Konrad entered it. How did he come in, for the door was carefully closed ? His face had a sinister and wild expression, but his smile reminded the minstrel of that which passed across the countenance of the lord of the forest castle, as he had seen him the night before.

“ ‘ This is the work of the evil-one !’ cried

Konrad,—‘ I will not risk my soul by accepting it.’

“ ‘ If this purse is the work of the fiend, I am damned !’ exclaimed the stranger, with a forced and bitter laugh.

“ Konrad, half re-assured, and tempted beyond resistance by the tingling sound of the gold pieces as the stranger chinked them in his hand, could not refuse. He took the purse from the stranger, put it in his doublet pocket, and when he looked round again, the tempter was gone. Konrad was almost sure he smelt the faint odour of brimstone, but that might (as he wished to think) have been fancy.

“ In a little while all things were changed with old Konrad. He was soon the purchaser of a handsome house, and he lived in the style of the wealthiest burgher of Kreukenthal. He nevertheless, for appearance sake, kept up the practice of his art. He attended and played at the balls and weddings as before ; but he travelled on the back of a well caparisoned and drowsy-paced mule, while a varlet trudged beside him carrying the bass-viol in a case.

“ This new order of things caused much con-

jecture in the burg. The received opinion was, of course, that Konrad had found a treasure, and that it was hid in his house.

“ Now Konrad had four nephews, good-for-nothing fellows, for whom he would do absolutely nothing. One day they said among themselves, ‘ Our uncle is now rich,—we should not be in want——’

“ It was enough. Each procured an arbalette, and all took their station at the cross roads, where Konrad was sure to pass that very day. The minstrel’s hour was come—the term of his compact expired;—four arrows pierced him at once—he fell dead;—his varlet, more lucky, escaped.

“ The four brothers, forgetting in their avidity this witness of their crime, ran to strip the body and seize the key of the house. But a tall man of terrible aspect was already in possession of the murdered carcass, which he threw across his shoulder; then with a yell of laughter that echoed through the wood, he exclaimed, ‘ I bought it! I bought it!’ and in a moment more he disappeared.

“ While the murderers stood in the double

terror of guilt and superstition, they were surrounded by the provost and his archers, whom the varlet had met in the wood. The bloody hands—the varlet's evidence—the disappearance of Konrad were more than enough. The four murderers were hanged, each on the tree which concealed them from their luckless uncle. It was long before their story about the fiend who carried away the body obtained belief. But the death-bed confession of Hans, the wizard, confirmed it, and established the whole of this legend.—And here we are, my own Anna, at the cross roads of the four brothers !”

“ St. Elfrida protect and bless us !” piously exclaimed the countess, who, in spite of her assumed air of gaiety as her husband told the story, had grown deadly pale by the time she reached the fatal spot, where her imagination conjured up the closing scene of the tragedy.

“ Thou hast never before heard this old tale ?” asked the count.

“ Never so minutely told as now,—nor yet, that the minstrel sold himself to the fiend for gold. Olivy, the intendant's wife, who once amused me with some mention of the strange

adventure, even said that it was the curse of an old woman that caused poor Konrad's ruin."

"Indeed," said Count Karl, with much emotion and in a tone of alarm.

"Heavens, my husband! what causes this look and that accent? Has thou seen aught that thy eyes should start forward thus, and thy lip quiver? Or does the mere name of woman move thee so?"

"Woman, my Anna, young or old is a dangerous animal—thou, thou alone excepted! Here we part, love, can'st lean towards me and exchange one kiss? Good morning and a good journey, dearest."

"Oh, Karl, Karl!" said the countess, a flood of tears bursting out and breaking the sentence into almost incoherent words, "this kindness, this affection tortures me even more than thy mysterious air of suffering.—What ailest thee, my husband? Thou art ill at heart, and wilt not deign to unbosom thyself here,—here in this true breast."

"No, no, sweet flower of Lichtenau!" replied the count, with a softened, but forced air of gallantry and gaiety. "No, I am well, very

well; but all men have a demon, Anna, and I mine."

"A demon!" said the countess, gazing intently on her husband.

"Ay, Anna, even so—a demon in the shape of some wild passion, some strange fancy, some wayward notion—no matter what its shape, but still a demon that haunts and harasses us at times. But I too, Anna, possess an angel to counteract the workings of the fiend—to lead back my vexed thoughts again—to keep the balance even—nay, to bear down in joy's fullness, the scale in which the good is weighed against the ills of life."

"'Tis sweet to hear thee talk thus, Karl, yet I am not quite satisfied. A spell hangs o'er this accursed spot; the evil one seems to haunt it still!" Good day, good sport, my husband! Bear thee well till thou feelest this fond hand once more!"

So saying, the countess cantered off, followed by her attendants, a smile lighting up her countenance and making even her tears glisten, as though sorrow was brightened by some up-rising beam of comfort. Count Karl had nearly re-

lapsed into his wayward mood at his wife's parting words, and the ever-springing pang which the touch, the thought, or the mention of a woman's hand created. But he gave spurs to his steed, and exchanging one more kind look with his fair partner, he galloped away into the wood; and at the appointed rendezvous, he found his friend, Ludwig of Steinbach, with a train ~~suiting~~ his state and the object of the meeting.

It was just at this season that large flocks of wild pigeons, migrating from the northern parts of Europe, came down to the forest shelter of Germany and France, and were caught on their passage by the peasants and sportsmen of those countries, by various devices which occupied for awhile men, women, and children. One of the most obvious means of entrapment was the use of large nets suspended from the trees in the open ways of the woods where the passage of the birds was most likely to take place. As Karl, Ludwig, and their party now trotted on the paths, while the dogs and prickers beat strongly the brush-wood at either side, they were often obliged to stoop low, to pass freely

under the nets that dangled above the road, and they at times amused themselves by observing the struggling prisoners, who flapped their entangled wings in the treacherous meshes.

The two nobles were always glad of an opportunity of meeting and being alone together. There seemed to be a sort of mysterious sympathy leading them to this, particularly since the sad catastrophe that tore poor Von Linz from their fellowship; yet it was strange too, that they should so associate, for they never met that a cloud of gloom did not hang over them, colouring their looks, their feelings, and their discourse.

But it must be something more real than superstitious weakness, something of actual, material ill that could overpower the exhilarating inspiration of the chase, in two beings in manhood's prime, bold, ardent, and enterprising. As the horns sounded, and the dogs gave tongue, and the wild boars snorted defiance, and bared their tusks for fight, the friends forgot all misgivings, all memory of the past, all thought of the future, and the day went merrily on, hour after hour witnessing their animated enjoyment.

It was at last sunset. They had been led on to a considerable distance from Great Felsberg ; and the growing gloom of the forest warned them that it was time to seek the castle, where Steinbach had promised to pass the night. An end was therefore put to the sports. The tired, yet reluctant dogs, were called off and coupled, and the prickers, huntsmen, and grooms ordered by the count to accompany the slow movements of the pack, while he and his friend, mounting the fresh horses which had been till then led for the purpose, set off together at full speed by the nearest homeward track.

Steinbach, whose horse was fiery and instinctively anxious to reach the home-stall, had advanced somewhat a-head of Count Karl, when they reached a rather narrow and precipitous pass. The latter reined in his steed, to descend the broken road with greater safety. His friend, less cautious, or hurried on by the impatience of the animal, galloped rapidly down the craggy way. In a few minutes the count reached the bottom of the rising ground, and entering again into the level forest-track, was startled by the sound of a voice, which he scarcely recognized for

that of Steinbach, uttering hoarse cries for help, while the trampling of a horse's hoofs seemed to say that some struggle was going on.

Count Karl pressed forward, but what was his horror on observing his friend's furious steed galloping back past him, riderless—and a few paces more in advance, that dear loved friend himself, in whose destiny his own seemed wound up, hanging in the centre of the road, his neck twisted and entangled in one of the pigeon nets, his legs and arms wildly thrown about in the fierce struggle with fate; while above him and at each side the fluttering birds flapped their wings in the meshes or were freed by his random clutchings; and the branches which formed the double gallows from which he hung, bent, creaked, and shook their seared foliage aloft.

The pang of agony that shot through Count Karl was more than may be imagined, and almost more than man might bear. It was not mere horror for the dreadful fate of another, and *that* is terrible to a feeling heart, but it was also the certain conviction of his own awful destiny brought home with an electric pang, at sight of this frightful fulfilment of the second portion of

the prophecy. He was for a moment—and at such a time a moment was worth an age—unnerved, unmanned. He had no power of motion or of thought. The gurgling sound of strangulation, the audible heavings of the breast, and frantic struggles, all told that his friend was at almost the latest gasp—yet Count Karl stirred not—but gazed in horror and stupefaction, as though his share of the curse had already come.

And well might he so believe!—for in an instant more, a woman, coarsely clad, with active bound and agitated looks, and an unclasped knife in her hand, sprang into the road from the covert of the wood. This seemed indeed the evident personification of his doom. Instinct rather than reason—the love of life rather than the dread of danger—man’s most mighty impulse—now re-assumed its sway—and the bold hunter of the forest, he who would have confronted peril in a thousand other forms, fled in disgrace and terror, recreant to his friend, his sex, and his very nature!

It would be hard to tell the wild imaginings that possessed him as he fled, the vagrant riot (as the legend expresses it) of his debauched and

inebriated brain. The frightful figure of the struggling Steinbach, and the water-bloated carcase of Von Linz, were for ever before his eyes; and to these were added, when he reached the cross-roads, the dangling skeletons of the gibbeted murderers, with the fiend who carried off his prey from the polluted spot.

This was a fearful combination of horrid fancies, goading and lashing on the almost phrensyed mind of Count Karl towards the goal of utter despair. He reached his castle in the gloom of night; and scarcely speaking or looking at his astonished domestics, he rushed to his own apartment and flung himself into the nearest chair. All wondered at the non-appearance of Baron Steinbach, of whom the huntsmen could give no account. Strange notions filled the minds of the servants. Count Karl was a feudal lord, and ran no risk of intrusion from his vassal attendants. No one of the household questioned or approached him. The repast prepared for his refreshment lay untouched in the eating-hall. He was left to the most hideous of solitudes,—that which is peopled by the dark phantasms of incipient phrensy.

As long as his lamp was alight he was heard at times pacing up and down his sleeping-chamber ; and again long intervals occurred of silence, now and then faintly broken by some murmured and incoherent words. Darkness was at length established in the room. One by one the household retired ; and Count Karl himself, worn out by the intensity of suffering, sank on his bed and lay down with his desolateness to toss about in waking agony, or sleep in that which is still more terrible.

All the wild fancies of the last few hours were then multiplied in every form. Preposterous scenes of horror danced confusedly before him. Every object that imagination could create, in connexion with those whose actual being was so cruelly stamped on his mind, were now around, above, beside him, in that unfathomable mood of mingled fact and fiction which had so wholly possessed him.

One leading object—one key-stone to the arch of agony which spanned his mind—was ever before him. A woman's hand, armed at all times, but in ever-shifting varieties, with some frightful instrument of death, seemed to mix in the crowd

of fantastic images, hovering over his head, directed against his breast, or grasping his full and choking throat.

At length—and Count Karl scarcely knew whether he was awake or slept the while—he thought the actual creeping touch of human fingers passed across his face. His whole frame was cramped and his blood curdled. The bed-covering rose and fell like the surface of troubled waters, from the heavings of his breast as his heart throbbed and he panted in excess of terror.

The fit passed over. Again he dozed—slept—dreamt! Again the distorted visions of fevered agony rushed across his mind; and again, while thus persecuted with unreal phantasms, the actual touch of mortality came on him. He doubted no more. He could not be deceived. It *was* a hand—not hard and broad and bony, seizing him with manly force—but light and fleshy, such as might grace the form of some soft woman, that now fell gently on his breast, and passing thence to his face, moved to and fro, as if searching out some sensitive and vital spot, in which to plant the poniard which ima-

gination pictured as gleaming in its fellow's grasp.

The sufferer could no more move from this dread consciousness than can the victim of torture break away from the bands and bolts that fasten him to the rack. He lay every moment expecting the blow of death, in that state of forced and fearful resignation which a criminal works himself up to in the few moments that see the fatal axe suspended above his neck.

But this was not long to be endured. Had the hand that now stole across Count Karl's blanched cheek and pressed his panting breast remained thus for another minute, he had probably quite sunk under the appalling torture. But a heavy sigh, which burst involuntarily from him, seemed the signal for its withdrawal. He was again free. The spell seemed removed that had enthralled his feelings; and the frame that erewhile lay in the torpor of coming death now throbbed and shook in all the desperate energy of recovered vigour. His brain felt a flame—his parched tongue clove to his mouth—his nerves twitched and quivered with fevered force. Again the horrid visions danced their round in

his imagination. New forms and new combinations of terror mingled in mazes more hideous and horrible than ever. He was wrought into a complete aptitude for the final explosion of phrensy, and the match was soon applied to the train.

Again the hand dropped softly on the flushed and fevered face of Count Karl. It was like oil falling upon fire. One pang—one scream—one bound from the bed, with a force that shook the room and rattled every article of furniture in astounding force—and the maniac (for so he was) rushed to the freedom of the open window, beyond which a low balcony hung out in the moonlight air. As he fled, he cast one frantic look behind and saw indeed a female form, which rushed after him with outstretched arms. He turned away his head—reached the balcony—placed his hands on the balustrade, and vaulting over with the force of fear aiding his active strength, he was in a moment whirling downwards through the air—then dashed to pieces on the craggy sides of the mountain on which the castle was perched.

It needs not to be told that it was Countess

Anna who was thus the innocent and agonized cause and witness of her husband's fate. Resolved to give him a surprise, which her heart falsely promised her would be one of delight, she had returned from her visit to Lichtenau, even before the unfortunate count came back to the castle. She gave immediate orders that her return was to be concealed from him. And placing herself in a private closet that communicated with his chamber, she awaited, with the patient playfulness of affection, till he slept. Then, resolved to bring him as she hoped to awaking pleasure, by the gentlest means of surprise, she stole out ; and, breathless with innocent anxiety, she performed, in a much shorter space of time than it appeared to her half-maddened sufferer, the well-meant but fatal series of manual experiments which brought on so frightful a result.

The legend says nothing of the subsequent adventures of the Countess Anna. But the remains of a little rustic temple near the ruins of the castle of Great Felsburg have borne from remote tradition the title of the Shrine of the Pilgrim Countess ; and it is believed to have been

erected by the wretched widow in honour of her saint, after the performance of a long and perilous pilgrimage, in penance for her fatal indiscretion.

The morning after Count Karl's dreadful death, Baron Ludwig of Steinbach was brought to the castle, alive and quite recovered, but still somewhat weak, and not a little frightened at the almost miraculous escape he had from strangulation. The woman who so providentially arrived on the spot of his accident, in time to cut him down and save him by her careful attendance during the night, was the wife of a woodcutter, and was employed in packing up and trimming the faggots of her husband's felling, when the struggles and cries of the half-hanged baron brought her to his relief.

Baron Steinbach was killed sixteen years afterwards, in an action against a party of imperial troops, and left a large family to inherit and hand down his name and honours.

About the same period a poor brother of the order of St. Benedict died, in the odour of sanctity, in the abbey of that order at Bingen. He had been nearly twenty years an inmate of that

holy house, and had been remarkable for his austerities, voluntary penances, and frequent flagellations. His name he never divulged till the day of his death. He then declared it to be Ulric Von Linz, and begged the prayers of the brotherhood for his soul, weighed down by the weight of many sins, particularly that of the murder of his wife Eleanor in a fit of jealousy, two days before he entered the abbey as a novice.

Thus we have the result of the Three Foretellings. One of the random prophecies was fulfilled, solely from the victim's belief in the accomplishment of the others. And what a deep lesson does it read to us, of the weakness of the human mind, and the gigantic power which superstition holds over it!

A YEAR OF JOY.

A LEGEND OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY.

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WHILE the celebrated Frederick Barbarossa, afterwards Emperor of Germany, was yet a youth, and his uncle, Conrad, the Duke of Swabia, still living, he was the hero of a little tale of love, so wondrously pure in its nature, as to throw a reproach on stories of periods more refined, and to convince us that that master passion was not dependent on the progress of civilization for its most genuine and delicate developement.

The young knight of Hohenstauffen, as Frederick was then called, possessed many of the qualities of heroism; and even in his earliest youth he gave proofs of the character which afterwards became so celebrated. But historians care little to seek for or to dwell on the romantic episodes of early life, which give a truer insight

into the dispositions of public men than those glaring actions either of virtue or vice, which, instead of being illustrative of the natural character, most commonly proceed from influences out of its control.

Among the loveliest of the daughters of the Duke of Swabia's vassals, was Gela, whose father was but a serf, and she, like the other maidens of her station, exposed of course to all the temptations by which the son of her feudal lord might choose to assail her. Frederick heard of her beauty, and with the natural ardour of youth and the usual motives of a feudal knight, he went expressly from the heart of his uncle's state to its confines, which extended to the Rhine, and there, in the town of Muhlburg, he waited an opportunity to gratify his excited curiosity.

After several ineffectual attempts, which but inflamed his wishes and produced that preparatory excitement so favourable to one who was determined to be enamoured to a certain point, the young knight at last succeeded in getting a view of the unsuspecting maiden, without letting her know the rank of her observer; for

in the romantic mood he resolved to encourage, he was determined that no influence but that of his personal persuasion should induce Gela to listen to his suit.

It was passing under an arcade that connected the principal square of the town with the church where the innocent girl regularly repaired to her devotion, that Frederick first met her, and was told by the dependant, whom he had taken as a pilot on this voyage of discovery, that he now gazed on the celebrated beauty of Muhlburg. Struck with admiration, and already before he saw her half in love, the looks of Frederick did not fail to express all the ardour of his feelings. Gela's eye caught the looks so intently following her movements and so fixed upon her face. She blushed deeply, and betrayed a consciousness—and as Frederick thought a sympathy—which vanity whispered him she would not have accorded so promptly to a common admirer. He followed her into the church, placed himself near her so as to have a full view of her beauty, and during the time of service he thought little of the holy office celebrated by priest, but much,

very much, of the lovely votary who silently offered up her prayers to Heaven.

Satisfied as to the real charms of the reputed beauty, he now began to devise the best means of securing them to himself; and having ascertained the place where Gela lived, he entered into a consultation with Rudolf, the devoted attendant who was his confidant in this adventure.

"Oh, Rudolf! she is indeed lovely—too lovely for her low rank in life—and far too lovely for my happiness, unless she can be mine."

"Why not, my gracious lord? Myself and your two horse-grooms can drag her from her father's and brother's arms this very night."

"Forbid it, saints of heaven!"

"Count Frederick, you were not so scrupulous when Gertrude of Arnheim was carried to your bower."

"Rudolf, thy reproach is scarcely just. She whom you name was more than half won when she was led from her father's cottage. She wore not the innocent smile of Gela!"

"Well, then, my master, if force revolts you,

try persuasion. A heavy purse of gold secured you the possession of Anne of Ebersdorf."

"There is no sordid or selfish expression in Gela's open looks, Rudolf. She is not to be bought and sold!"

"Abandon the pursuit, then, good my lord! I know no other means of obtaining possession of the prize except by purchase or force."

"I do, though, Rudolf; and Gela shall be mine by other means, or not at all. Conquest shall make her mine! Love shall be the sole weapon; nor shall gold corrupt, any more than violence undo her. I swear to win her to my arms by love alone, or to renounce her quite; to make her share my passion, not to submit to it!"

"Nay then, count, if this romantic notion has possessed you, my presence can be but of more harm than help!"

"I think so, too, Rudolf, and I wish you to leave me to myself. Hasten back to court,—say nought of me,—you know not where I am nor on what pursuit. Remember! you will not betray me?"

"From this hour no mortal shall know more

of your plans, my noble master, than my tongue has already told."

"Enough, good Rudolf, be staunch and secret!"

And Rudolf was so. He told no more,—but he had already told enough to mar the amorous and romantic plan of his young master, not with a treacherous design, but from over excess of zeal.

The father of Gela was a husbandman in easy circumstances, tilling his ground, greatly to the benefit of the lord of the soil, and a little to his own. He was a serf it is true, but not quite a slave; and his children, though obliged like all their class to work for their own support, were not absolutely forced to toil for a bare existence. Even in those days, when social life knew but few shades, and extremes were almost touching, there were still gradations between the higher and the very lower ranks. Gela's father stood somewhere—it would be hard to exactly classify his place—but somewhere between his liege lord and the mere drudge of the farm yard. His sons and daughters had the benefit of his comparative refinement; but one of them bore that

inherent stamp of natural grace, that patent of superiority to her station, an instance of which is even now remarkable, but *then* was marvellous. That one was Gela.

Besides her there were another daughter and several sons. The girl was always ailing, and at times almost bed-ridden. Gela was her nurse ; and she acted almost the part of a mother to her brothers, though they were older than she, for her father was a widower, and on her had fallen all the domestic cares and household management for all. The house which this family inhabited was at some short distance from the town, on the banks of the Rhine, surrounded by vineyards and commanding a view of the broad river, the very habit of gazing on which might give to the beholders a reflected character of depth, expanse, and dignity.

This is not the place to examine the question of moral effects produced by the influences of scenery on the mind. That mountaineers and sailors are susceptible of strong impressions from constant intercourse with nature's wild grandeur, is admitted. If so, why doubt an analogous sympathy with objects of lesser proportions? If

the boor of the Dutch swamps be dull and heavy, or the shepherd of the sandy deserts of Gascony no livelier than the flock he guards, why not suppose the dwellers on the Rhine to catch their placid, serious, regular tone of character from the grand object of external nature, that not even a casual passenger may gaze on without a deep, calm flow of feeling stealing on his soul? Be the cause what it might, such was the habitual tone of Gela's well-regulated mind. Her heart and her brain were in constant unison. Feeling and reflection never jarred. No struggle was kept up between sense and sensibility. The whole was harmony, and she its living type.

It was at the close of a day of usual labour followed by repose, that the whole family I have described were sitting at their evening meal in front of their dwelling. Gela was beside her sick sister, her constant post; and the common, perhaps the common-place, round of social converse was going on when a young stranger in a hunting dress and on foot appeared before the party. His dogs at his heel appeared, no more than himself, fatigued, yet he told a story of his

having lost his horse in the chace, and he asked hospitality and lodging for the night.

The prepossessing air of the stranger would have no doubt procured a hearty assent from the father of the family, even if hospitality had not been a law of the age of chivalry. A cheerful acquiescence and a cordial invitation to partake of the frugal repast were instantly given by the father, and confirmed by all the children, save one. It was not the invalid who silently hung her head, and hid her blushing cheeks, as the sportsman seemed to wait anxiously for one invitation more to complete the general welcome. After a moment's pause he fixed his looks on Gela, and asked, in a tone which she thought seemed to blend something of command with supplication, "And will not you, fair maiden, join your voice to the other biddings? Is the tired stranger unwelcome to you alone? Do you fear to give shelter to the wayfarer?"

"You are welcome to the shelter of my father's house, Sir Stranger. Hospitality never stops to take counsel from discretion—nor do we fear to do a kind action, even though there were some risk in it."

Gela was hurried to make this reply by the somewhat dissatisfied looks of her father and brothers, which rather seemed to reproach the previous want of courtesy, so complained of by the stranger.

“ If there be risk, it is all on my side, fair Gela,” said the stranger, in a half whisper, and sitting down beside the blushing girl with a self-command which was however softened by a tinge of timidity. So it is, that even incipient love teaches diffidence to the high and lordly. When the passion is full grown, its first fruit is humility.

And it was not long before the admiration of Count Frederick ripened into the most powerful attachment for Gela. Day after day he found his way to her father's house ; and having once established a footing of acquaintanceship there, he was at every new visit received with new pleasure. Unknown in that part of the country, the good serfs little thought who it was they entertained, and his modest bearing only allowed them to believe that he was some young man of gentle blood, amusing himself, as he asserted, with the sports which abounded in that neigh-

bourhood. His numerous presents of game, and his constant appearance in the accoutrements of the chace, gave proofs in support of the character he assumed, and it was never questioned openly by any of the family.

Franz Richter, for such was the name he assumed, was quickly a great favourite with his new friends—at least with those of the good peasants who seemed inclined to admit him to the familiarity of that term. But in the manner of Gela there was a constant reserve which would have driven Frederick to despair, had not evident pleasure in his society as constantly struggled through it. He saw that he had, even in despite of all her prudence, her modesty, and an evident, yet unpremeditated air of respect, whenever she listened to or addressed him, gained great ground in her regard; and once or twice, when seizing some fair occasion, he pressed on her with unwonted warmth of language, she blushed and sighed, and gave such token of sympathy that he believed for a moment all that his most excited hopes suggested.

But Gela as instantly recovered from these lapses of the heart. She started back as if af-

frighted at the discovery of her danger, and her looks seemed to carry reproach to her tempter and remorse for herself.

Thus three weeks rapidly passed by. Count Frederick was in no mood to reckon time nor calculate dangers. Yet the long absence from his father's court and the chances of his being recognized, at intervals struck forcibly upon his thoughts, and finally he heard the warning. He felt it necessary to bring to a termination this romantic freak. He had never before devoted a tithe of the time to complete a conquest. The triumphs of the great over the lowly are, alas! too often ready made. Yet there was something so delightful in this new method of love-making, and in the exquisite suspense it entailed on the lover, that he shrunk back at the notion of success. Strange perversion of feeling! Strange anomaly of sensation! Yet, who has not felt it?

While thus lingering in the double influence of his passion, he one evening bent his way to his accustomed haunt, and his road lay through one of those secluded little glens which run up in so many places from the river between two

shadowing and wood-covered hills. Scarcely had he entered this solitude, when he saw a female figure gathering herbs by the side of the little stream that rippled through the glen. It was Gela. Frederick was soon by her side. He offered to assist in her task of collecting medicinal simples for the use of her sick sister. She consented, and for some time they continued their task silently, and as if neither knew exactly how to finish the work, and had forgotten how it began. At length, as though a sudden inspiration of courage had darted from on high into Frederick's heart, he paused, looked tenderly on the lovely girl by whose side he stood, took her hand, pressed it to his heart, and murmured "Dear, dear Gela! I love you!"

The words were simple, the sentiment obvious; yet how powerful their effect! All the eloquence of language, all the arguments of sophistry, could never produce as much. Gela was utterly overwhelmed by this avowal, although she had been less than woman had she not previously observed and understood the sentiment, and the symptoms which betrayed its existence. But instead of the rapture which the

words and looks of her lover might be supposed to create, her only sensation was terror—terror arising from many causes, for her own honour and the safety, perhaps the lives, of those most dear to her. No sooner did Frederick's words fall on her ear, than she instantly dropped on her knees before him, and raising her clasped hands, she exclaimed, in an accent that thrilled his heart with surprise and sorrow, "Oh! forgive me! forgive me! I am greatly guilty—but you will not refuse mercy."

"Mercy! Forgive you, Gela?" cried Count Frederick, in amaze, and raising her from the ground; "I cannot comprehend this—'tis for me to seek *your* pity, as I ask your love—for me to prostrate myself before you, beautiful and virtuous as you are—my fate is in your hands; tell me that you admit my passion—that you return it—or you drive me to despair!"

"Oh, spare me this mockery—'tis too cruel! Is it not enough that my treacherous heart has led me to listen to the seductions of your influence? I am punished sufficiently by the consciousness of my presumption!"

"What language is this? What mean you,

Gela? Presumption! in listening to—or, could I but hope it from these vague words,—in returning, the love of *Franz Richter*?”

“No, I can no longer act a part of vile hypocrisy—I know you but too well! Oh! Count *Frederick* forgive, and spare me!”

“Ha! you know me? *Rudolf* has then betrayed me?”

“Say not betrayed—he warned me who you were, to forward, not to thwart your views—and I, criminal and weak, instead of flying and hiding myself from the danger of your love, have risked my own, my dear father’s, my brother’s safety, in spite of this warning! But spare me, noble count! at least have pity for the weakness which yielded to attractions that overcame the sense of peril which they excited!”

“Say then, Gela, oh! say it and seal my happiness, that despite your dread of my station and my power, which bade you to hate, you still loved me for myself alone—say but that you love me!”

Gela had just said she would not play the hypocrite, in one sense—she *could* not, in another. She yielded to the count’s embrace,

dropped her head on his shoulder, and burst into tears.

The incoherent and impassioned phrases in which the lover expressed his triumph may be guessed—they are not fit to be told. For, though chaste and pure, such as break from even the most libertine in the first ecstatic moments of discovery, these genuine outbursts of the heart would be but ludicrous in repetition, though nearly sublime in utterance. Gela's first words were—
“ And you will not drag me from my father's protection—you will not plunge us all in sorrow and ruin—you will spare as well as pardon me ?”

“ May the saints of heaven bear witness, and punish or reward me as I am false or true to my oath ! I never will do a deed or breathe a thought that can bring harm to you or yours—but will love you ever as now, in purity and honour ! Oh, doubt me not, Gela ! nor break the spell of delight in which I am bound—give me your whole heart in trust and confidence—if you cannot speak it, *look*, at least, your confidence and your love !”

Much more was said and *looked* in this short meeting than tradition has told or fancy cares to

imagine. The result was an agreement that the lovers should meet the next morning again—not however in the same place, for Gela, recalled to a full sense of her danger by the ardent advances of the young count, positively refused her consent to make this perilous glen the place of rendezvous. That which she fixed on was the church of the village close by, and the hour that of the celebration of mass. “Impious and profligate!” may rise to the lips of the harsh votary of cant. Wait patiently, good hypocrite, and you shall be better able to judge!

The lovers met the next morning, we need not say *punctually*. Frederick never paid so little attention to his prayers. Gela never prayed so devoutly. His desires were at the moment all earthly; her hopes were wholly fixed on heaven. The service over, and the rustic congregation dispersed, the lovers soon found means to be again alone in one of the shady walks of the neighbouring wood. Frederick, recovered from the first effects of his delight, had somewhat reproached himself for the little advantage he had taken of his triumph. And he now hoped rapidly to recover and improve on the time he had

lost. He therefore returned to the subject of the preceding evening with all the ardour of youth and hope; but Gela suddenly interrupted him, and placing herself upon a mossy bank, she invited him to sit beside her, and then, with a calm but deeply affecting tone, she said, "Count Frederick, I must, in atonement for the feelings I too clearly betrayed yester-even, explain the decision which a night's reflection has confirmed. We met this morning almost at the altar's foot. I fixed on that holy place that you might be a witness to the vow I solemnly made to Heaven. I there *swore* never after this day to see you without ample witnesses—and, oh! let me add, without risking your contempt—never, after the avowal which escaped me in a moment of surprised agitation, never to listen to words of love from other lips than yours! That was the solemn pledge which you saw me ere while make to Heaven, and as I keep it, so Heaven help me!"

"See me without witnesses, Gela! And do you then so soon begin to doubt my sworn engagement?"

"No. I believe it—would risk my life and that of all most dear to me on your honour. It

is not you I fear—but myself! Too deeply have I already erred. My self-confidence is gone for ever. But if you will consent to mark me undergo not too long enduring penance, and at the same time make it one of joy, you will come, on every sabbath for a year from this day, to this church, and watch me as I offer up my prayers for your happiness and greatness—and at the end of each new time of service grant me one look, one smile, to tell me you approve my task, and cheer me on in its performance.”

The passions of youth are all composed of impulses sudden, vigorous, and at times irresistible. It is thus that so many strange and fanciful results take place, so opposite to every calculation of probability or prudence. Who could have imagined that the young, the proud, the powerful knight of Hohenstauffen would have listened to without a smile, much less acceded and sworn to fulfil, a proposal so torturing to his excited hopes, so foreign to his prompt, impatient character, and so attended with almost insurmountable difficulties? Yet such was his conduct. He agreed to Gela's proposal; and while she thus secured to herself the delight of

seeing him and receiving weekly proof of his affection and her own influence over him, she compounded for the dangerous indulgence by the reflection that malignity itself could not misrepresent the nature of their connection, and that Heaven would surely smile upon the purity of her conduct.

And thus for a whole year did this unparalleled scene of love go on. Frederick, overcoming every obstacle, contrived at the close of every week to snatch one day and night, in all seasons and from all other pursuits, to ride league after league, unattended and unknown, from nearly one extremity of his uncle's territories to the other; and then having regularly seen his beloved mistress in their holy place of rendezvous, exchanged a few looks and smiles—for which she had stipulated—and occasionally conversed awhile, in the presence of the good family, with her for whom he was thus preparing the sacrifice of all that might be supposed to influence a man of his age and not totally above the spirit of his time. Witnessing the extreme purity of feeling which animated this being so superior to all around her, he could not resist the influence he

so admired, and he paid the sincerest homage to virtue, not merely in adoring, but by adopting it.

And now the year of happiness was nearly expired ; and Duke Conrad being about to set out for Palestine with the other Christian chieftains of the empire, Gela recalled Frederick to the high duty which summoned him to attend his father on the crusade. Startled at first, on finding her an advocate for a separation, the anticipation of which almost rent his heart, he could not resist the dread that her love was only of that vague and vapoury kind which derives its source in fancy rather than feeling, but which has no sympathy with those human desires that were meant to give force and fervour to mortal passion.

“ Oh ! Gela,” cried he, in the bitter disappointment of this fear, “ If your love is but ideal—if you worship an abstract notion of which I am but the type—if it is not me, in my bodily form, that controuls and commands your attachment, I may as well die at once ; my memory will serve you for an object, though this frame may moulder in the grave ; for if you can urge my

absence for a year, you could surely bear it for a life !”

A passionate burst of tears was the first answer to this speech ; and they were followed by a train of reasoning so clear, so true, and so convincing, as would have done honour to the most elevated princess to whose hand the Count of Hohenstauffen might have aspired. Coming as they did from the daughter of a serf, their effect was a thousand fold greater. And while Frederick gazed and listened on the wonderful union of beauty and wisdom from whom he was about to tear himself, perhaps for ever, he was lost in grateful admiration of her who could sacrifice her best hopes of happiness and her highest of ambition, for the furtherance of his honour and his fame.

Count Frederick assumed the cross, and hastened to the Holy Wars ; nor did his conduct for a long period of service belie his noble lineage or his own reputation. After nearly two years of hard-earned honour, he prepared to return to Swabia, and claim the hereditary rights to which his uncle's death entitled him. Mingled with all the calls of pride and the loud acclama-

tions of glory, one still small whisper made itself heard in the young duke's heart. Love, which for awhile had been subdued by the clang of arms and the shouts of ambition, now resumed its gentle, yet powerful inspiration ; and he hastened to the scene of his former stolen delight and honourable self-restraint, his bosom throbbing high in the ardent hope of at length obtaining possession, as a tribute to his constant affection, of what all the blandishments of wealth, and rank, and power would have failed to purchase.

He rode up to the well-remembered cottage, in the old guise of Franz Richter, the sportsman. He was received by the father and brothers of Gela. But before he could ask the question that sprang from his heart to his lips, he saw that she was absent. His lips quivered and his heart sunk, and the question could not find utterance. But they saw and read his emotion truly ; and they soon told him what he so longed to know, but could not ask.

Gela, almost worn out with the intense ardour of her feelings, and unable to support in secret the passion which consumed her, had resolved to enter into a convent not far distant, and had

actually taken the veil; never betraying to her family the rank of her lover, but avowing her love, and declaring that insuperable obstacles existed towards the possibility of its ever terminating in a way consistent with her honour or happiness.

The duke, almost frantic at this news, avowed who he was, called on the father and brothers to aid him for their own as well as Gela's sake in tearing her from the sanctuary that interposed its walls between her and his affection, promising to lavish on them honours, distinctions, and riches, more than were possessed by the proudest nobles of the state. These poor serfs, not knowing the true meaning of honour, nor the real value of rank, dazzled by the promises of the duke and frightened by his violence, consented to his last proposal, and without fixed plan or settled purpose, they led him immediately towards the convent where Gela was immured.

Nearly arrived at the holy house, a procession met them on the path. It was a burial train, chanting hymns of mourning prayers for the repose of an innocent sister's soul. It was Gela, who was thus carried to her early grave. Consump-

tion had fixed in her fair and too sensitive bosom, and like the canker in the rose-bud, destroyed the flower ere it fully bloomed or blossomed.

Duke Frederick's anguish was keen and lasting. It was long before he listened to condolence, and then only from the sister who received Gela's last words:—a blessing on her lover, and an assurance that suffering and death themselves were a thousand fold repaid by the remembrance of her one delightful Year of Joy.

The town of Gelahausen, built on the spot where the innocent girl was buried, was long and is still under a modification of the same name, a lasting testimony of the better feelings in the character of Frederick Barbarossa.



THE LADY
OF
THE COLD KISSES.

A LEGEND OF THE YEAR 1200.

THE LADY
OR
THE COLD KISSES.

A LEGEND OF THE YEAR 1200.

OF all the valleys whose central rivulets run tributary to the Rhine, there is none more remarkable for its picturesque and isolated beauty than that of Hammerstein. Few travellers who pass through it fail to ask the name and history of the large building which, with outspread wings and vast body, seems quietly to repose by the road side. It is now a manufactory ; formerly it was the Abbey of Rosebach, but it was commonly known by the name of *Teufel's Haus* (the Devil's House) in consequence of the story of which it was the site.

In olden times the forest, which even now nearly covers the whole mountain behind, spread

down into the plain and close to the abbey walls ; while numerous avenues, cut through it in every direction, allowed the voluptuous monks to gaze unobstructed on the verdant valley which loses itself in the broad bosom of the Rhine. The limpid waters of the rivulet which now flows clearly along, as nature meant it, to offer homage to the sovereign stream, were in those days twisted and turned by sundry contrivances, to swell the ponds in which the good fathers fattened the fish that was eventually to fatten them. These ponds are now dried up ; but in the good old times we speak of, their stagnant bosoms often bore, from morn till night, many a little boat, on the soft cushions and under the painted canopies of which the lazy anglers of the abbey threw out their lines, of a summer's day.

The Abbey of Rosebach combined all the reality of those secluded delights which the dreams of the Epicurean conjure up ; a retreat where, far from the cares of life and the fatigues of the world, a votary of idle pleasure might drawl out his listless existence. The wealth of the brotherhood was on every side evident, in the internal as well as the external aspect of

things. Cellar and larder well stored, spoke sufficiently to the good taste and good cheer of the community. The costume of the monks was of white stuff of a fine and silky texture, and of exquisite cleanliness. Their hair hung down in long loose curls on their black scapulars, and the elegance of their sandals has passed into a proverb. Grieved I am, for the honour of monachism, to record that their licentiousness was scarcely less a by-word.

It was one sultry night towards autumn in the year 1569 that a young man, wrapped up almost to suffocation in the folds of a large black cloak, cautiously approached the walls of the abbey, and when safely under the shade they threw out on the lawn, he crept slowly along to a point that marked the bounds of the dormitory. Arrived there, and looking up to a little projecting window of the tower, he gave out a suppressed cough. Suddenly at this sound a bald head was popped out of the window, and a rope ladder immediately dropped down, suspended from and fastened carefully above. The young man sprang up with an accustomed step, and balancing himself from time to time on his

vacillating road, he was received in the open arms of two half naked members of the brotherhood, who helped him in at the window, and then began to enter actively into a whispered conversation, in which he performed the chief part.

The young monk, for his calling was betrayed by the mixture of sacred and secular in his costume, soon entered deeply into the recital of some interesting adventure, in which the soft name of a woman was certainly mixed, and which vividly excited the feelings of the listeners, as was testified by the smothered sighs and other sympathizing symptoms which escaped them from time to time. At length the triumvirate separated for their several cells.

When the young monk was alone, he threw himself upon his bed; but though it was one on which a minister of state or his crowned master might have found repose for their harassed minds, its possessor could not sleep. Agitated and tormented, by recollections of the past or anticipations of the future, he tossed and tumbled, invoked his patron saint, or repeated aves and paternosters without end, and to no end. His

eyes, though closed, could not shut out the scenes of memory or the visions of fancy. In vain he started up at times, bathed his hot brow with water, or thrust his flushed face into the night air that now played freshly on the window. He found that he was doomed inevitably to a sleepless night—which had perhaps been less intolerable, had it not also been one of solitude.

In this dilemma he valiantly determined to kill the enemy he could not hide from. So striking light by means of his flint and steel, he lighted the thickly twisted wick that floated in an earthen bowl of oil suspended from the ceiling close to his head, and seating himself at his table, he opened a thick manuscript which had been lent to him by the abbot from his private library that very morning, the parchment of which was ornamented and emblazoned with gold and colours of the most vivid varieties. He opened the book without design; and began to read, without any attention at first, but gradually with an increasing, and at last with a breathless interest, the following legend of the formation of the Abbey of Rosebach.

“ Christian Reader,

“ Much doth it behove you to read and ponder on attentively this true history, if you would duly know when and how his Highness Count Otto of Reuss-Marlinberg, Lord of Hammerstein, after having long struggled with his bishop, as his impious ancestors had done before him, after having still longer followed the foul ways of sordid interest and base selfishness, after having weighed what was just and was unjust in the balance of his desires,—in which the just too commonly kicked the beam,—after having scoffed at conscience and held penance in scorn, was at length struck all at once with deep compunction for his manifold crimes. After that you shall behold how and wherefore he put the glory of God in the front of all his movements, and took all the churches and hospitals of the circle into his special care, and how he became as honoured and revered by all the servants and followers of our holy religion, as he was before detested, and abhorred, and hated.

“ But, reader, you must know that his Highness Count Otto of Reuss-Marlinberg possessed

on the very spot where now stands the Abbey of Rosebach a strong castle, with four round towers and thick ramparts, all manned and guarded by archers and men-at-arms, to the full as vicious and cruel as was in those days their lord and master.

“ The wickedest among them all, master or men, was an old squire whom no Christian eyes could look on without terror, and of which, to speak truly, he could almost as little bear the looks. In *his* eyes there was an expression that the hand of a Christian could not well describe unless with a pen dipped in some devilish ink, which we Karl Von Hanz, brother of this holy Abbey of Rosebach, possess not—blessed be to St. Peter, patron of the same! The fiery and copper-coloured tints of his weather-beaten skin made him look like a malefactor who had escaped from the fagots, ere the executioner had burned him quite; or, perhaps, rather like a fiend sent out half scorched from the flames of a hotter fire. This man or demon, or man-demon, or man-devil, boasted of having fought in the holy land, and of having caught his vile complexion

under the burning skies where the Redeemer of the world died for the sins of men.

“ But if his body, indeed, bore arms for a sacred cause, it did little good for his soul ; for old Riquenbach (so was he called) dealt out lustily curses and abuse against all the saints of heaven, without excepting even (may pardon be granted me for telling again the like !) without even excepting the Holy Virgin herself, the immediate source of all earthly good.

“ Now, in spite of all these wicked ways, in which we have omitted,—not willing to lean too heavily on a fallen sinner,—drunkenness, pillaging, and ferocity, this Riquenbach had ingratiated himself greatly into the favour of his libertine young lord, Otto of Reuss-Marlinberg. ’Tis true that he employed all the tricks and cunning of his old experience to pander to the passions of the young count ; and it must be known that he excelled in the noble art of horse-breaking, and it was enough for him to whisper a few words in a courser’s ear, or to throw him a look, to make gentle and manageable the wildest colt in the pastures of Hammerstein.

“ Now there were few things which Count Otto loved better than to prance and caper on a high-mettled palfrey ; but it must be remarked that, aided by the perfidious and damnable advice of old Riquenbach, he found the means of managing the chief part of the damsels of his domains, even though they at first proved restive as the young colts of the pastures.

“ It came to pass that one fine morning Count Otto, riding on the high road, met with a young girl, fair to look at and of a lovely presence, who came from a neighbouring village, for the purpose of entering the Convent of Walsdorf not far distant, in fulfilment of the pious intentions with which Heaven had inspired her, of ending her days in the peaceful retirement of the cloister, in perpetual prayer and in the way of grace. Strong in her blessed design, she walked on alone, her beads in her hand, and having already adopted the hood and corresponding costume of a novice nun.

“ Count Otto of Reuss-Marlinberg took off his cap as he passed her, rather from habit than any feeling of respect or devotion. On seeing this, Riquenbach, who rode beside him, burst into

a laugh, and shook so in his saddle that he nearly fell off his horse.

“ ‘ By the devil of hell !’ said he ; ‘ by his horns and his tail ! you have nothing now for it, my young master, than to put on the frock and cowl ; and instead of feeling that iron scabbard flapping against your thigh, you should scourge your naked shoulders with the whip-cord of discipline ! Fiends and furies ! in passing a damsel you doff your cap as if you had met the consecrated chalice—I will pay my respects to her in another style !’

“ And turning his horse’s head he galloped after the young woman and brought her back to the count. To the questions which they put to her she answered modestly, but without fear, telling the reasons which brought her on the road. Count Otto, the while, began to feel uneasy and impatient, in listening so long to a voice so soft and words so touching, and in gazing on a pair of fine black eyes, which beamed with the voluptuous languor of one longing for repose from the world and its snares. He sighed—and fearing the influence of wicked thoughts, he told the young maiden to follow

her course ; but while she obeyed this wholesome advice she heard herself called again by Riquenbach.

“ ‘ Holloa ! fair maid,’ cried he, ‘ you should not think of trusting yourself alone on this dangerous road. Rogues and rascals of all kinds are abroad and might do you harm. As for us, you see we are pious folk who take off our caps at the very sight of a novice’s hood. Come with us to the castle, close at hand ; where you can pass a safe and quiet night, and to-morrow pursue your way.’

“ The poor young creature followed this treacherous advice !

“ Saints of heaven ! Martyrs to the sacred cause ! Holy Virgin ! What took place in the Castle of Rosebach that night ? What dismal moanings, what piercing screams, what cries for help were borne away on the careless winds, while the soldiers, the servitors, and the serfs, in and about the accursed edifice, listened, shuddered, but did not or dared not offer aid !

“ At dawn the sounds died away entirely ; and before noon a coffin was buried in the dry ditch of the castle, no priest declaring, as was usual

in cases of sudden or violent death, the name of the person for whom the *De profundis* was chanted in the chapel.

“ It was somewhat less than a year after this cruel adventure, that Count Otto of Reuss-Marlinberg espoused in legitimate union the young and beautiful damsel, Eldegarda of Munch-Benderhausen. The marriage took place at the Castle of Rosebach ; and the hour for retiring, after the ceremony and the supper, soon arrived—but very slowly, according to the calculation of the happy bridegroom.

“ Left, at length, quite alone with his bride, he advanced towards her with gentle animation, and was about to offer her an embrace of nuptial affection, when he suddenly felt himself held back by the pressure of two icy arms round his neck, while a bosom, marbly-cold leaned against his, and lips which felt like those of an unburied corpse inflicted a succession of frozen kisses on his mouth.

“ And then, by the beams of a faint glimmering lamp, love’s natural light, he saw the livid-coloured form of a female interposed between him and his terrified bride. He would have believed

it a phantom of heated imagination, but he was too clearly convinced of the frightful reality. Her tall and graceful figure, her long brown tresses floating on her neck and shoulders, her bright dark eyes beaming in fearful lustre, her violet lips, her colourless cheeks and bosom, all proved her to be the much abused and murdered novice, risen from the grave to punish his unrepented crime. Holding him still closer at every struggle to escape, she lavished on him kisses that pierced with cold pangs even to his very heart, exclaiming in loathsome tenderness :—

““ Otto, my beloved! It is of me, not her, thou art the husband. For thee, and by thee I lost all my hopes of heaven, and the Divine Bridegroom my confessor had promised me thee. Thou art mine, beloved Otto! I only am thy wife!”

“ This bride of the charnel vault disappeared not till morning. When the joyous and mischief-looking bridemaids entered to congratulate the young countess, they found her, dressed as they had left her the preceding night, in a swoon, on a couch beside which knelt the scarcely less exhausted count.

“ And the following night the spectre return-

ed; and the night after; and every succeeding night, with her cold kisses, her icy embrace, and her loathsome words of love.

“And in vain did Count Otto, with the innocent young bride who suffered so severely for his sake, fly from place to place, from castle to castle, from town to town. The Lady of the Cold Kisses followed, or rather accompanied them every where; and every time that he threw a look of love upon his wife, or held forth his hand to snatch even one pressure from hers, the spectre as surely glided between, repeating some phrase of amorous delight, and sealing it with a kiss that almost turned Count Otto into stone; while her very beauty of feature and brightness of eye, rendered her livid hue more loathsome.

“And assuredly Count Otto of Reuss-Marlinberg, and Eldegarda of Munch-Benderhausen, his spouse, would both have died in consequence of this persecution, if the holy St. Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, in Flanders, had not chanced to come on a mission of peace into the unquiet countries of the Rhine.

“This pious saint heard of the miraculous events which have just been told; and it was not

for one so learned and keen sighted in matters of sin to doubt that for a punishment so terrible there must have been committed some enormous crime. Desirous of establishing happiness in the castle of Rosebach, and of banishing for ever the demon which so embittered its promised joys, St. Bernard sought Count Otto, and found him in a state of wretchedness that would have melted the hardest heart.

“ ‘ There is one way,’ said the holy man, after having listened to his confession, ‘ and but one way of obtaining relief from the persecutions of the evil spirit ;—consecrate yourself to the holy monastic life, abandon the pomps and vanities of the world, cover yourself with the robes of seclusion. The pious austerities of the cloister purge the soul of its wicked thoughts, cleanse the conscience of its iniquities, raise a rampart between the faithful and the fiend, relieve the most poignant mental anguish, and open the way to heaven !’

“ ‘ Remember Him,’ continued the saint, with redoubled energy, ‘ Remember Him who dwelt on earth in continence, solitude, meditation, and prayer. Embrace the retirement of the cloister,

miserable sinner, steeped as you are in guilt, and give thanks to Heaven that affords you a sure way to pardon and happiness. I have told you, and I repeat it, without the cloister there is no chance of Paradise. Embrace then its pure and exquisite enjoyments. Follow up your penances with rigid care, the kingdom of the skies will open to you at length—Satan will be overcome—the head of the serpent shall be bruised !

“Eldegardâ shuddered and sighed when Count Otto and the saint rejoined her, at the idea of renouncing for ever the love and the society of her husband. Seeing her affliction, the count felt his heart half broken, and he stood silent and immoveable. The old Squire Riquenbach, who had slipped into the chamber, no one present knew how, fixed his piercing and discourteous looks on St. Bernard, and said abruptly, fixing his arms a-kimbo in the most contemptuous way: ‘ By the merits of my old blind mule ! you have poured out a rigmarole at which a cat might laugh. Heigh devil ! Ho devil ! as we say in the camp, what would you be at, old bald-pated gossip ? Would you have my noble young master here give up all the

joys of life, and leave the harvest of pleasure to your vow-breaking monks, who would laugh while he was praying? I think I can read the Scriptures, and *quote* them mayhap, as well as you, old mischief-maker, and if you don't quietly quit the castle and leave this young couple in their natural state of merry making, I may show you a way to lay a meddling monk easier than that which sends a ghost to the Red Sea.'

"A holy indignation crimsoned the face of the holy man. '*Vade retrò, Satanas!*' cried he, in a tone of enraged authority; for he had a shrewd suspicion that it was none other but the devil himself that could have the audacity to brave him in this manner. Old Riquenbach began suddenly to tremble in every joint; and Count Otto and his wife observed myriads of bright sparks fly out from him in marvellous rapidity, and in a way not to be imagined, much less told.

" '*Vade retrò, in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritûs Sancti!*' continued the saint, who saw that his words did their work well. And scarcely had he pronounced the sacred exorcism than a crash as loud as thunder shook the walls of the

room ; and when the holy man and his astonished companions looked vainly for the figure of the demon-squire, they only saw a heap of smouldering ashes, and they were all obliged to hold their noses to keep out the pestiferous stink of brimstone which nearly smothered them all.

“ And how was it possible, Christian reader, for Count Otto or his wife to resist the conviction of this prodigy ? It was *not* possible. They obeyed in all things the dictation of St. Bernard.

“ The reader will also see, in the progress of this edifying history, how Count Otto gave up his castle and grounds of ———, that the former might be pulled down and a convent built on its site, and the latter converted into walks for meditation, and shrubberies for——” (here the young monk who read the MS. could not resist a smile, notwithstanding his state of agitation from the effect of the preceding parts,)——“ the recreation of the holy men who were henceforward to dwell in the sacred premises.

“ And herein will also be recorded how St. Bernard brought to the place and put in possession of the convent twelve monks of piety and virtue,

under the guidance of one Rowland, English by nation, first abbot, who all died in the odour of sanctity. And how the saint performed sundry extraordinary miracles; among others, his causing to spring up suddenly out of the earth a fountain of clear water to refresh the thirsty labourers who built the convent walls; and his procuring an iron cart which carried stones, blocks of wood, ready made mortar, and other necessary objects for the construction of the said convent, without being dragged by horses or guided by visible beings. And here be it remarked that when the building was completed, the before-named cart returned, self-impelled, to the woods, and no living eyes could ever afterwards discover it or any part of it, or any trace of its wheels.

“ And while all these miracles were going on, Count Otto and his afflicted dame, in due obedience to the commands of St. Bernard, prepared to retire severally into the seclusion of the cloister. But the said saint saw, one night in a vision, our Lady of Grace, who commanded him not to separate the married couple, who had as yet known nothing of marriage but its name. They

were accordingly allowed to live together without hindrance, and many years passed over their heads, seeing them give the best example to their children of the fear of God and the most edifying exercise of devotion.

“ For, from the time of the disappearance of the devil, as old Riquenbach was so clearly proved to be, the Lady of the Cold Kisses, who from first to last had been nothing more nor less than a fiend conjured up for the purpose of entrapping the young count’s soul, was never more seen by either Count Otto or his countess.

“ But—and sinners, hypocrites, and renegades to the true faith and to your holy engagements beware!—but—and tremble ye false ones, who renounce your religion, your duty, and your God!—but from time to time it is permitted, by Divine Grace, and for the wise purposes of Heaven, that the aforesaid fiend, or Lady of the Cold Kisses, does return in her already-told semblance upon earth, that is to say, upon the floors of the cells of this consecrated abbey of Rosebach, to hold in her icy embrace and stifle with her clay-cold kisses the sinners whom she

fills with leathing and affright. And the causes of these her miraculously-permitted visitations are, firstly, whenever the hot blood of a sinful nature mounts higher than the regulated scale of religious duty, and some young brother of the abbey fraternity failing in the vows of chastity which he had sworn to observe——”

At this instant a violent stroke from an invisible substance fell upon the throbbing temples of the palpitating monk, and at the same time his face and neck were covered by a cold shower of liquid, while instant darkness obscured the cell. Terrified beyond the controul of every reasonable conjecture, he fancied himself clasped in the clammy embrace of the Lady of the Cold Kisses, and he roared out lustily for help. The brethren rushed in from the neighbouring cells, and found him pale, trembling, and covered with the oil of his primitively-constructed lamp; while a huge brown bat fluttered about the lights which the brethren carried in their hands.

The young monk smiled, after a painful effort, and alleging as an excuse for his screams some agitating dreams, he betook himself to bed,

his reverend comrades drowsily returning to theirs.

From that period the young monk was rarely observed to wander in the shrubberies at dusk, and was never known to mount a rope-ladder at midnight.

THE DOUBLE DOUBT.

N. 3



1

THE DOUBLE DOUBT.

CHAPTER I.

THE romantic stories of the Rhine and its neighbourhood have been frequently transplanted to other sites. Such has been the case relative to the legend on which the following tale is founded ; and I at least perform an act of literary justice in bringing it back to its original scene of action.

Not far from the town of Hirzenach are seen the ruins of two castles, called Liebenstein and Sternfels. They are situate close to each other on elevated and rocky points, covered with vineyards intermixed with wild and stunted shrubs. A deep glen lies between them, and the patches of pasture which here and there dot its sloping sides are separated below by a little stream, that loses itself in the thick wood through which its gurglings come faintly up, where all other sounds are still.

These castles were once inhabited by two

chieftains, named Conrad and Eberhard, the first occupying Liebenstein, the latter Sternfels. They were old friends and companions in arms. They had formed through life a marked exception to the general ill-will generated by close neighbourhood in the feudal times. Their castles were not closer than was their friendship, and there were ties of sympathy to bind it more close than is common. They had each married, and both become widowers nearly at the same period, and an only child was left to each to form pledges for the continuance of their close connection. Resolved to devote their whole lives to the care of their children, they totally forsook the boisterous career of chivalry, and consoled themselves for the blessings they had lost in the enjoyment of what was left—the smiles of infancy and the offices of manly regard. The triumphs of the tournament and the glory of the battle field had no further charms for them. They hung their shields, their casques, and coats of mail in the halls where those of their ancestors were already ranged ; and their whole hopes now turned on the prospect of twining for their offspring a wreath of happiness, as bloom-

ing and more lasting than their own, which had too soon withered.

The name of Count Conrad's daughter was Erilda; that of Count Eberhard's son, Harold. The fathers watched the progress of their mutual affection with anxious eyes. From infancy to adolescence it was just what they could most desire. They observed two young hearts, as it were bounding high on the enchanted ground of Hope, wandering at will, careless of the path, so as they traced it together, nor dreaming that it was ever to be darkened by even the shadow of disappointment. In their earliest youth they seemed ruled by the same thoughts and led by the same impulses. Their pastimes and studies were regulated alike. When Harold gave up the sports of mere infancy for those of boyhood, he seemed already warmed by the fire of chivalry. Armed with a paper-target and a hazel-rod for a lance, he used to charge boldly against many a field of thistles and poppies, and strew the plain with their scattered flowers, or build up some turf-formed battlement to be razed again by his attacks; while Erilda stood by, like some lady of the sports, ready to reward with smiles and kisses

the champion who did such wonderful deeds for her honour's sake.

The contiguity of the two castles may still be seen in their ruins. It was such that the lights from the battlements of the one fell reflected on the arms of the other's sentinels, and they could almost catch the whispered sounds of their mutual words of watch. Within the walls of these castles torture or suffering had no echo. Power was not abused, nor dependence turned to slavery. The neighbouring serfs were proud of their chieftains, because they were not themselves degraded; and such chieftains, so rare in the records of their barbarous age, were the lights that faintly glimmered on the opening day of civilization.

Twenty summers had scarcely browned the front of Harold, and developed his strength of body and energy of mind, when he had drunk of the deep stream of glory, for which as a boy he had so thirsted. We must pass hurriedly over the events and scenes of his youthful growth, and imagine all those that marked the education of a young aspirant for the honours of chivalry. Nor can we dwell on the joy which filled his

bosom when old Count Conrad dubbed him knight—when the scarf was thrown across his shoulders by the fair hands which worked its embroidered edges—nor on the mutual anguish of parting, when he tore himself from *her* embrace and rushed to the scene of his first feats of arms.

The desultory combats of those days furnished ample opportunity for the display of martial prowess. Sir Harold gained his full share of fame, and having proved himself a worthy scion of his race, he returned from the turmoil of war to the joys of domestic life. The perils and hardships he had encountered, enabled him to appreciate the happiness now in store for him. He claimed and obtained the only reward he looked for; Erilda became his wife in all the glow of her beauty, all the purity of her affection; and as she gazed on him in the full reality of wedded delight, she only wondered how it were possible that he was indeed her own.

Inhabiting alternately the two castles, this united and happy family possessed the true enjoyments of a common home. On the wedding-day Erilda left her paternal walls, according to

custom, to occupy for awhile those of her husband and his father. But on this removal from the home of her ancestors she knew none of the alarms or regrets of those maidens who are borne away, in the fond arms of their husbands, to scenes foreign to all their former tastes and habits. There was no formal display of strange and curious faces watching for her and annoying her on her arrival at her new home. She removed across the little rivulet as though stepping from one path of her accustomed playground to another. The beaming countenances that hailed her arrival were long known and dearly loved. The bridal flowers were culled from her own garden. Her favourite lamb and fawn were browsing the next morning on the lawn over which her lattice opened. As she looked out on the glen, she saw the osiers that she herself had planted by the side of the rivulet. Beyond she saw her own flowers, blooming in the parterre she herself cultivated. As she waved her hand towards them, in the playful salutation of innocent happiness, they seemed to answer from their bending stems; and the matin song that was borne on the soft breezes came

from the throats of the feathered choir which was fed by her own hands.

We may well suppose that years flew quickly over a scene like this. Time never rests his wings to dwell with happiness. He only lags and lingers with pain and misery. But how does the imaginative mind long to pause amidst the joys it pictures, shining like the blue spots of a sky which storm-clouds are about to blacken! How love to see itself reflected in the overflowing fountains, whose sources rise in the holiest sympathies of nature, where fancy flutters like the summer bird that dips his wings in the warmth of some sunny lake!

One daughter was the fresh link in the chain of love which bound the four individuals who formed this family circle. She was called Freda. She gave a thousand new springs to the feelings of father, mother, and grandsires. The happiness of all seemed complete.

The occupations of those to whom literature was indeed a sealed volume must have been monotonous, and can be scarcely called intellectual. To tell and listen to tales of war, love, and magic, by the blazing fire in winter, or in the

shady bowers in summer ; to visit the habitations of the vassals ; to feed the pilgrim, or list to the minstrels at the gate ; to walk on the broad terrace that looked down on the beauties of the Rhine, and hearken to the chimes of the convent bell, or the sounds of Erilda's lute or Harold's manly voice—such was the usual round of their pursuits.

The following was one of their simple and favourite roundelays.

“ ROUNDELAY.

I.

“ Brightly beams the placid sky ;
Softly smiles the moon on high ;
Sparkling dances every star
That shoots its fairy light afar ;
All above looks blithe and gay—
Let not mortals then below
A single shade of gloom betray,
Reproaches on the Heavens to throw !

II.

“ Nature speaks in simple tones
That modest echo sweetly owns ;
Then let not man's presumptuous lyre
To loftier harmonies aspire—

When friendship's honest vows we breathe
They need not come from gilded bowers;
And if affection twine the wreath
No matter where she culls the flowers!"

But this long season of delight could not last for ever.

It was at deep midnight that the solemn sounds of a chanted requiem arose in the low vaults of Liebenstein castle. Sighs and lamentations mingled with its sad melody. Pale monks were seen by torch-light, and weeping domestics swelled the train of death. It was in the following strains that the dirge gave expression to the general feelings of piety, and honour for him who was gone.

"Rest thee in peace, illustrious Son,
Ennobler of a noble line;
The conflict o'er, the battle won,
The victory is thine!
Rest, till that day when thy dark tomb
Re-opening bursts its bounds;
When, summoning to thy endless doom,
The last loud trumpet sounds—
And thy purged soul shall glorious rise,
A stream of splendour on the skies—
Rest thee in peace!"

And for whom was all that sad pageant per-

formed—the swelling anthem, the passing knell, the stately tapers, the solemn mass? What noble sinner was mourned so pompously and so sincerely? The group that stood silently beside the vault, taking no part in these noisy demonstrations of woe, were living but not speaking answers to these questions. The beautiful young woman who wept so bitterly, leaning her blanched cheek on her husband's shoulder, plainly shewed that she mourned a parent's death, and the bending form of the old warrior by their side, seemed to take, in the deep grave, a last farewell of his former friend and companion in arms. Count Conrad slept with his fathers.

The last service was performed. The household attendants had retired. The officiating monks had wended their way to the neighbouring convent. Count Eberhard, Sir Harold, and Erilda had lain down on their couches; but sleep had not yet relieved their sorrow on its unavailing watch when the horn, sounded loudly at the castle portal, roused up its surprised inhabitants.

And well may all now start up in alarmed an-

icipation of some great change in the even tenor of their lives. Well may Erilda dash the tears from her eyes—they were fitting tributes to her present grief, but suit not with that which awaits her. Well may Sir Harold spring from the embrace of beauty and the indulgence of peace. War now claims him as its own.

The impatient courier who had so roused up the castle hastened into the presence of Sir Harold, and delivered him a rescript from the emperor; then mounting a fresh horse, for his own had dropped down dead in the court-yard, he galloped off at full speed, to serve the remainder of a batch of imperial summonses on the neighbouring chieftains.

The young knight of Sternfels, thus taken by surprise, felt all the natural ardour of his disposition spring up as though from a slumber of years. The passion for war, the longing for fame, the instinct of loyalty, all acted together; and every ignoble regret was hushed in the clamour of Christian and feudal sophistries, that told him his first duty was to destroy the Turk and aid the emperor.

The speed of the courier, and the promptness of military preparation in those days, were proved by his gazing, within an hour, from a hill four leagues distant, on the faintly distinguished walls of Sternfels; and at the same time seeing the sun-beams glitter on a crowd of helms and spears, which were soon however lost in a cloud of dust that rose swelling up, as if proud of the warrior train it enclosed. The foremost of Sir Harold's band was already on its route; and he with the remainder of his required quota was not long behind.

The din of preparation was heard loudly in all quarters. The large bell of the castle sounded the alarm to the vassals whose duty it was to hasten ready armed to that summons. The courts and halls were filled with impatient crowds inquiring the cause of this assembly, and preparing to carry the peremptory orders of the emperor into effect. Squires, pages, archers, men-at-arms, all thronged together, and all soon disappeared. The spacious stables were left empty. The walls of the armoury were bare. In places where the morning light had been reflected back from a martial tapestry of banners, targes, helms,

and lances, a broad and cheerless blank met the beams of the noon-tide sun. No longer did groupings of busy idlers pace the courts and ramparts. No songs rose up from sportive voices. The castle maidens were not seen gaily wandering in the garden. Snugly shut up in their several apartments, they wept their departed lovers, or strove to distinguish from the turrets the one dear form, among the parting troops which now fast faded from even the eagle-eye of affection.

This sad and dreary change was so sudden that it appeared to those who gazed on it like the shifting cheatery of a dream. But one among the rest was so overwhelmed with the stroke that it seemed as if she, who felt the most intensely, had not felt at all. No sigh broke from Erilda's lips; no tears gushed from her eyes; she complained not; she did not cast her looks languishingly around; but stood calm and motionless, as though life itself had left her, with him for whom alone she lived. And it was in vain that her attendants and the good Count Eberhard strove to rouse her from this waking

trance. She seemed paralysed beyond the power of revival, until the voice of her infant daughter, calling on her from the cradle where she slept, caused the flood of feeling to rush again through the frame in which it seemed to be extinct. "My child! my child!" cried the now too acutely conscious mother. The infant, affrighted at the wild energy with which she strove to clasp it, shrunk away; and the half frantic Erilda fell beside it, totally exhausted by the shock of returning sensation.

Sir Harold never paused, nor ventured to look back till he reached that hill on which we have said that the imperial courier observed the distant tower of Sternfels. The conflicting feelings of its young lord can be well imagined and could be but ill described. Urged on by all the combinations we have briefly sketched, drawn back by those strong but gentle ties which all may picture, he had to endure a painful struggle. Often was he tempted to throw back one farewell glance on the towers that held all that was really dear to him on earth, but he dared not. He knew that one glance would totally overcome

him. He therefore clapped spurs into his courser's sides, and drove him on at a rate which suited the fugitive who fled from his own thoughts. A new and unexpected object soon gave him the most opportune relief, by allowing vent to his feelings in a way which soothed without opposing them.

In the road which he now galloped down so furiously, followed by his favourite squire, who alone witnessed the struggle he had so bravely endured, he discovered a group of mounted men. Foremost among them was his own near kinsman, Rupert of Stalbach, the heir of Sternfels in failure of sons on the part of Harold. He was a brave soldier, of small means, neither wanting nor wishing for more than he possessed; rough and honest, without care, loving his kinsman, and quite indifferent to the entail, the advantages of which he did not covet. He was older than Harold, who regarded him with that mixed kind of feeling which is not exactly brotherly love nor parental reverence, but partakes somewhat of both. Erika had always considered Rupert of Stalbach as the type of moral and martial worth. The emperor, with whom he

was a great favourite, had given him some local command which added to his scanty income; but he would gladly now have forfeited place, profit, and promotion for the distant harvest of fame which he envied Sir Harold's chance of reaping.

"Well met, Rupert!" cried the latter.

"Thou art on the road to Sternfels?"

"Ay, Harold, to give thee a rough blessing on thy expedition, and a rougher curse that I do not share its glorious chances."

"I take thy blessing, my friend, and leave thee still a proud and honourable charge. I go, Rupert, to meet the infidel and uphold the true faith, in the ranks of our liege lord. It may be I have taken a last farewell of my father—my wife—my child ——" A pause, and a nervous pressure, given to his kinsman's outstretched hand, told Sir Harold's emotion. "While they lament my absence,—or should I fall——" continued he.

"No more, no more!" exclaimed Von Stalbach, "we must not be unmanned, good cousin. Let this be enough, I swear to you, as a Christian knight, that while I breathe, thy wife

shall want no brother, thy sire no son, nor thy child a sire !”

A cordial embrace sealed this pledge and ended the interview. In a little more each party had pursued its different route, and no trace remained of either cavalcade.

CHAPTER II.

IN as short a space of time as could be consumed in the journey, Sir Harold and his gallant troop had joined the rendezvous of the imperial rearguard, and gained the passes of the Hungarian hills, across which his road directly lay towards the Danube, on the banks of which river the emperor had determined to measure his forces with the Turk. The picturesque varieties of the route from time to time excited the chieftain, and he occasionally broke from his absorbing reveries, to gaze with wonder and admiration on the lovely scenes he traversed.

Often he would push on far before his followers, and meet the rough breeze that gave its wholesome greeting from some mountain top, blowing aside his mantle, sporting in his jet-black plume, and giving to his cheeks the bright glow of health, which too often conceals the canker of sorrow. Sometimes he would stop his horse suddenly on the ledge of a precipice, and,

while the trembling animal threw wild glances into the chasm, mark the wild goats bounding securely from crag to crag, or whole herds browsing at leisure on the verge, while their sentries watched on some rocky point, in all the instinct of discipline.

Then would Sir Harold be recalled to more home sensations, by hearing the chorus of some song of the Rhine borne upwards on the breeze, while the singers were seen slow-pacing their way on the rugged paths, the spray-shower dashing from the mountain cascades, and the sunbeams playing on the white foam or glancing from the polished armour. As the squadrons gradually ascended, some were at times to be seen pausing, to let their steeds snatch a refreshing draught from the stream that oozed out of the rocky soil; and when at length the summits were reached, and the riders stretched their stiffened limbs upon the welcome ground, the blown and tired horses robbed the wild animals of the hills of a portion of their scant verdure. It was thus that Sir Harold and his brave companions worked on their tedious, yet not quite unvaried route.

In the mean time, the main body of the imperial army had reached the Danube; and they soon crossed it in great force and spread far into Bulgaria, where the assembling host of the infidels was preparing to meet their advance. Many chieftains of renown, of old families, and acknowledged rank, had joined the emperor on this expedition; but among them all none was more remarkable than one adventurer, whose titles to distinction were not to be traced to any of those common causes which obtain the homage of the vulgar. His name, as he himself gave it out, for no one else could vouch for it, was Rudolf of the Hartz—a wild and vague title; that corresponded with the character and all that was known of the career of the man. His course of service could not be traced farther back than some five or six years, at which period he had offered himself as a volunteer in one of the terrible domestic quarrels waged between two independent and powerful vassals of the empire. His haughty mien and proud look, though he was but a youth, made many an old soldier shrink from any curious inquiries as to his lineage or connexions. Once, and once only,

Some comrade, less cautious than the rest, imprudently put a question of the kind, with a sneer of doubt for its accompaniment.

"My name is known," replied the adventurer. "I am Rudolf of the Hartz. Whoever wishes for records of my birth or race must search them on my sword blade. Whoever doubts them!"—but turning quickly aside, he seemed to check his rising passion, and a blush was seen to pass across his brow. From that day no one made further inquiries, and Rudolf was allowed to rest in mystery, but not in obscurity. Not only his courage, but his many accomplishments forbade the latter being his lot. His tall figure and handsome face prepared the observers to admire his versatile talents. His pencil was skilful at tracing likenesses of objects in nature or of art. He sang well, touched the lute skilfully, and made verses with the fluency and grace of a southern troubadour. Yet beneath all the semblance of graceful amiability which covered and gave new worth to these attractions, the keen observer might perceive at times symptoms of a character the broad reverse of amiable. A hurried and envious flash would

break from his dark-fringed lid when any comrade of the battle field received even deserved applause. And frequently when his friends—as they were called in camp parlance—fell in the fierce contests from which he had the good luck to escape, an ardent and pleased glance lit up his large eyes, and a fiend-like smile curled his lip, as though he felt relieved from the oppression of a weight of rivalry.

When the end of this petty war threw Rudolf out of occupation, his accomplishments were turned to good account, and he started on the paths of peace as a troubadour. With courtly air and lightsome step, singing, sighing, roving, and amorous, he pursued his course. A welcome met him wherever he presented himself,—but curses and reproaches generally followed his departure; for the regrets of confiding love were too commonly the results of his visits. Remorse never seemed to sting him; and he loved pleasure less for the enjoyment he indulged in than for the mischief it allowed him to perpetrate. But war again burst out, and on a scale proportioned to his growing ambition. The expedition of the emperor opened a new field to

every adventurer ; and a warrior of his reputation was received into the combined army of Christian chivalry as an acquisition of no common worth.

The army had crossed the Danube ; the white tents of the Christian encampment spotted the green plains ; and obscurely seen from the distant cliffs, they looked like sea birds reposing on the bosom of ocean. The palisadoes and trenches were fixed and cut, and the broad banners of the various chieftains gave defiance to the unbelievers. Skirmishes and marauding excursions soon tried the courage and skill of the troops. Reinforcements came on day after day, and all awaited with impatient valour the expected crash of the two armies in decisive conflict. But wherever in the prelusive conflicts danger was to be braved or booty gained, Rudolf of the Hartz was foremost.

One evening, after a day of active warfare, the emperor had assembled in his tent the principal leaders of the various forces, Rudolf among the rest, to gather their opinions, in a general council, as to the plan of action to be immediately pursued against the now closely approach-

ing enemy. While thus gravely occupied, a cry that sounded like surprise and superstition broke on them from without. All paused; and some rushed to the opening of the tent, to inquire the meaning of the sounds which were repeated, louder and more near. In a few moments they returned, making way for a captain, who had guarded one of the passes across the river, and now hurried up from its banks, uttering the exclamations which had so surprised the council, and forcing his way to the presence of the emperor.

“Great potentate! noble chieftains!” exclaimed he, throwing himself at the emperor’s feet, “woe and ruin are coming on us fast! The hopes of Europe, the pride of Christendom are about to be overthrown! Fly, my great liege, oh, fly from this foul land, where magic encircles, and must destroy us all! Where demons troop on against us, and walk the waters and the winds! You doubt?” continued the terrified captain, seeing the incredulous and angry looks of the emperor and the rest. “Go forth then—see with your own eyes, mighty sir, and ye bold and sceptical chieftains! see

the wizard squadron as it comes slowly up from the river's side, having crossed over on rafts, no doubt as immaterial as the forms it seemed to bear over ! While leading it onwards, is *he*, the redoubted Rudolf of the Hartz, who stands here a living mortal man, but is there nevertheless, changed by some hellish arts of devils' craft into a bloodless and fleshless fiend !”

Incredulous, yet thrilling with the superstitious misgivings of the age, all hastened out of the tent, the emperor at their head ; but those who looked on Rudolf were struck with amaze to see him, always the first on every occasion of real danger, hang back pale and aghast, at the strange and incoherent announcement of the captain.

“ Is he indeed terrified,” thought they, “ at this wondrous boding of some evil to himself ? Or is this some trick of magic, which he has learned to play ?”

When they reached the outer opening of the imperial tent they one and all started back, stunned with astonishment. It was not indeed a spectral delusion that met their sight ; no airy nothing that came to scatter dismay among the imaginative heroes of this new crusade. — But a

tall and gallant warrior, armed at all points, who having dismounted from his steed, advanced to pay homage to his imperial master. And as he knelt before him, neither the emperor himself nor those who surrounded him could command a word, or utter an exclamation. The stranger chief was so like Rudolf that sense could scarcely yield credence to the scene. When he spoke some short phrase of dutiful profession to the emperor, it would seem as though a spell had tuned his tongue and voice into sounds the very same as the other so well known to the wondering listeners.

“ ’Tis Rudolf’s self !” cried several.

“ See, see, here comes the real Rudolf !” exclaimed others. And Rudolf himself did indeed now advance from the tent, having recovered his self-command, and filled with angry consciousness of having quailed under the influence of fear, for the first time in his life. When he caught a full view of the armed warrior before him he stopped short—a pang of doubt and terror shot through him—and he looked speechlessly on the as evident resemblance of his own person, as though a mirror had hung in the air before him. Nor did the stranger—Sir Harold

of Sternfels—throw a less astonished gaze on him, their faces alternately exchanging looks of petrified astonishment.

When the first burst of surprise was over on all sides, and the loud greetings of the whole host had risen up, to hail the arrival of Sir Harold with the first of the Rhine country contingents, the tired and still wondering chieftain gave his first attentions to the accommodation of his followers. He next sat down to write a hasty account of his arrival at the camp, to be ready for a homeward bound courier who was to start the following morning. His brief letter contained only a short statement of his safety, and alluded to the extraordinary resemblance which had caused such amazement to the whole army, and given him sensations quite new to his former ones,—for he felt, he said, “as though he had found a brother in this unknown chieftain.” Those who remarked the effects produced by this letter on its arrival at Sternfels—among whom was Rupert of Stalbach—saw in Erilda only a grateful and happy expression of countenance, on hearing her husband’s safety; but could not avoid marvelling at the abrupt start,

followed by a long mood of uneasy thought, which betrayed some hidden emotions in Count Eberhard.

And how did Rudolf of the Hartz feel on recovering from his first alarm, and knowing who it was to whom he bore so miraculous a resemblance? Was his breast filled with the same warm and generous impulses that animated Sir Harold's? No, no! far different emotions agitated him. The shame of having betrayed a superstitious sensitiveness, envy of the bold knight who came to dispute the palm of merit with him in a variety of ways, and still a deeper and almost unfathomable source of hatred, all conspired to goad him on to mental agony. The sentries who paced before his tent declared that he did not rest the whole night, but that he held converse till dawn with his own thoughts, or with some invisible companion. But morning saw him step forth, with a smile as tranquil as though an angel's hand had smoothed his perturbed brow.

He paid an early visit to Sir Harold, and in the course of a few weeks their intercourse ripened into a close intimacy. With characters like that of the Knight of Sternfels it requires

no long period to induce a belief that what should be is; and that he should become the easy dupe of an artful designer was the natural sequence. His unsuspecting heart opened freely to the cunning designs of the villain who worked on him; and he felt as though almost repaid for loss of home and friends by this new made intimacy. It was by no common vows that it was cemented. Sir Harold and Rudolf agreed to become pledged together by the ties of fraternity of arms, a solemn engagement common in those times. This ancient usage was sometimes solemnized by orgies partaking of savage ardour rather than civilized sympathy. But the present votaries did not mix blood with their wine. Religious rites stood in place of that barbarity; and their "brotherhood" was on one side sanctified by sincerity, while cunning and bad faith degraded it on the other.

It may not be told to what design the duplicity of Rudolf pointed in the first stages of this intimacy. But an accident soon occurred which decided his bias towards an intention of most atrocious stamp. In the frequent encounters of the prolonged campaign the brothers in arms

were never separate. The black plume of Sir Harold and Rudolf's white one were the only points of distinction between them. In the hours spared by duty they partook together of the rude joys of the camp; stretched on the green sward, and singing their light lays by turns, or mutually recounting stories of their past lives—those of one of them being at least veracious.

One day they were thus lying in Rudolf's tent, when Sir Harold, overcome by fatigue and heat, fell asleep, and his open vest shewed his bosom's treasure, the miniature of Erilda which he always wore near his heart. Rudolf's eye was attracted to this portrait which he had never before seen. An instant passion for the beautiful being it represented took possession of his breast. He fixed his enamoured look on the senseless ivory as though it were an object of life on which he gazed. And this single glance awoke a thousand sparklings through the gloomy den of his mind, like the flashes drawn by a single torch from the spar-formed columns and arches of a cavern. But all tended to bring to light one demoniac project. This was to destroy Sir

Harold ; to speed straight to Sternfels ; to shew his almost identical person to father, wife, and child ; to obtain possession of wealth, influence, title—and with them that which he now valued, or fancied he valued, higher than all, the original of the portrait whose beauty had so fascinated him.

From this moment his assiduities to his unsuspecting victim were redoubled. With consummate art he led him on to indulge in the natural garrulity of affection, to talk of those who filled his heart, to relate a thousand little facts that lie loose scattered in the memory, secrets of youthful love, and many minor touches of home description and early recollections, all of which the designing villain treasured deep in his brain.

Twice did Rudolf steal from Sir Harold's breast, while he slept, the portrait of his wife ; and with great care and a firm hand, albeit his heart beat high the while, he copied the painting and forged this passport of true love, whose tranquil smile seemed silently to condemn his felony. When the task was over, and some nice and finishing touches added in the security

of his own tent, he looked at the work with gloating eyes, and he felt that all preliminary measures were now taken to clear the way for the main act of the design. The destruction of Sir Harold now alone remained to be accomplished. To perform this safely was not a matter as easy as it was desirable. He would not entrust the task to any hand but his own, for he had all the ferocity without the usual recklessness of villainy. To assassinate his confiding companion might have been on many occasions easy, but not without exciting suspicion of himself; so he waited, with impatient cunning, till fate might throw some safe opportunity on the path they traced together. This opportunity came at length.

A small division of the imperial army was one day detached to make a false attack on a portion of the main body of the Turkish host, in order to cover some ulterior operations; but particular directions were given to its commander not to risk an engagement which might lead to a general battle. Hurried on, however, by impetuosity, the chieftain went too far, and the consequence was that the few thousand men he

commanded fell into an ambuscade, the common tactics of those days, and while he paid with his life the penalty of his rashness, his unfortunate troops were surrounded and left without a single hope of safety. Sir Harold of Sternfels and Rudolf of the Hartz were among those doomed victims.

Prodigies of valour were performed by the furious and desperate Christians. But as mountain streams that shrink in summer between the ragged banks that enclose them, so did the band of heroes, parched and faltering, dwindle away between the closing flanks of the infidels, whose wild yells of triumph told that there was no mercy to be hoped for. The "companions in arms," Sir Harold and Rudolf, both unhorsed and both wounded, stood in the very front of the fight; and wherever an opening could be made in the foe they moved forward side by side, the same in bold and majestic look, their distinguishing plumes flowing behind, like two tall vessels plunging through the sea with streamers floating to the storm. The gallant men of Sternfels followed close on their chieftain, but

one by one they dropped down in death, choking the wide chasm of glory's grave.

At length Rudolf sunk to earth, under a powerful stroke; but as the scymitars of the shouting enemy were about to fall on his head and consummate his destruction, Sir Harold threw himself before his body, and for a time kept his numerous assailants at bay. It was in this moment of his companion's generous devotion that Rudolf driven to the madness of villainy, by the dread of his intended victim after all surviving him and his plans, resolved to violate not only his oaths of brotherhood but the still more holy ties imposed on him by friendship and gratitude. Rising suddenly up from his recumbent posture, his fierce aspect caused a moment's relaxation in the attacks of Sir Harold's assailants. The newly revived man looked horrible as well as terrible. His blood-drenched plume streamed down upon his deeply stained visage, his eyes shot forth a wild and meteor-like glare through the raven locks that hung disordered around them. He sprang up like a tiger bounding on his prey; but while the

dastard foes shrunk back, it was against Sir Harold he sprang. The latter weak from wounds and exertion, opened his arms to embrace his reviving friend! At the instant Rudolf's rapier pierced his corslet and entered his breast. Sir Harold fell; and then his assassin struck blow after blow, and forgetting self, safety, every thing but the completion of his desperate design—no matter at what cost—he flung his own body on that of the bleeding knight, while the amazed but rejoicing infidels rushed round the prostrate bodies, and hid the result of the almost incredible scene.

A few stragglers were lucky enough to regain the imperial army. They gave the above mentioned details of the fatal fight. They could tell no more; but that as they fled from the elevated grounds which enabled them to see what passed, they heard the clank of chains mingling with dying groans, while at intervals wild shrieks rose up, as if the butchering infidels closed their bloody task at leisure.

END OF VOL. II.



